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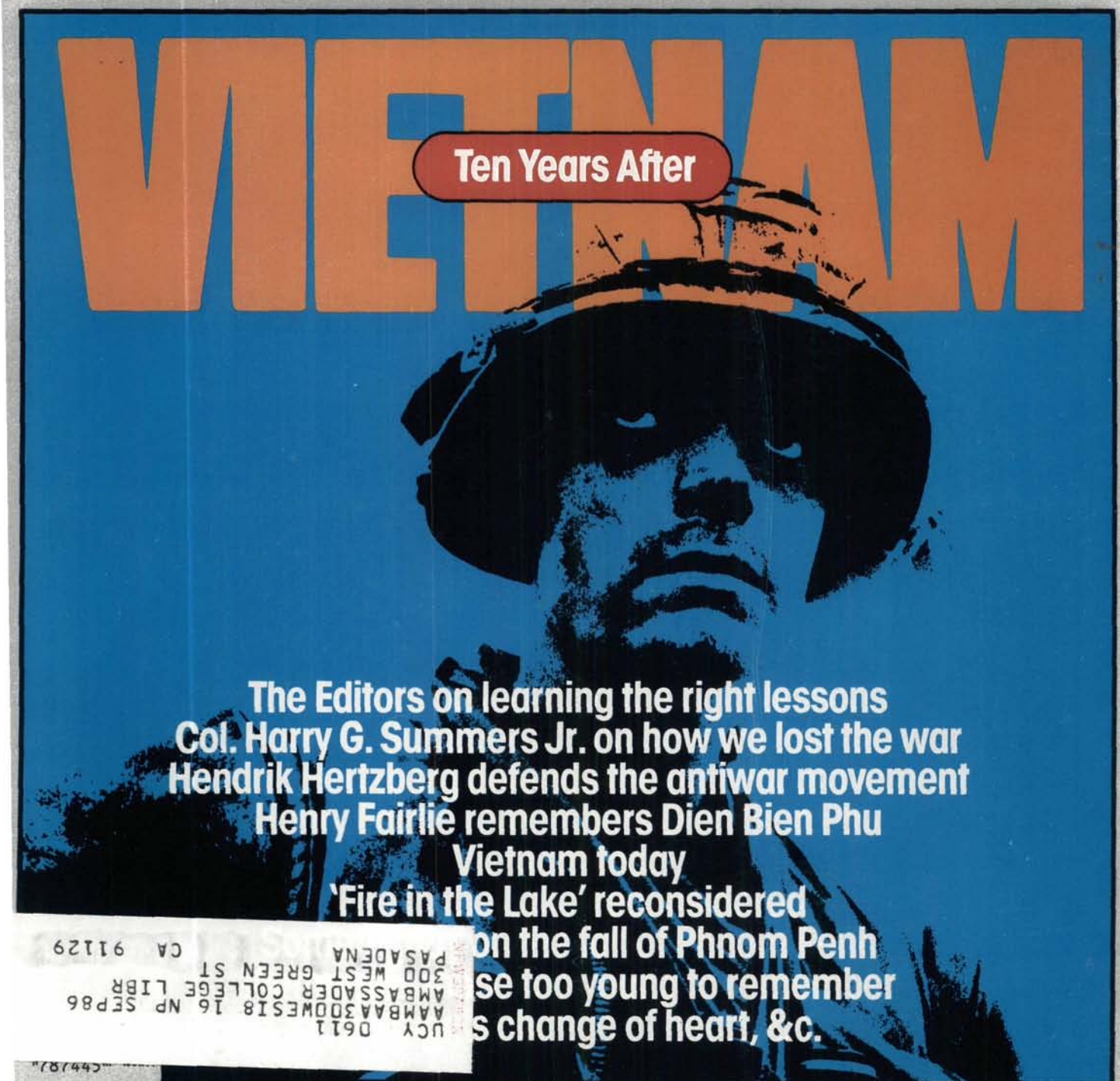
THE NEW REPUBLIC

APR 17 1985

VIETNAM

Ten Years After



The Editors on learning the right lessons
Col. Harry G. Summers Jr. on how we lost the war
Hendrik Hertzberg defends the antiwar movement
Henry Fairlie remembers Dien Bien Phu
Vietnam today
'Fire in the Lake' reconsidered
on the fall of Phnom Penh
se too young to remember
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FROM WASHINGTON

THE REAGAHNEV DOCTRINE

The future of American government support for the *contras* in Nicaragua depends entirely on Democrats in the House and Senate. Of all the reasons being heard for approving President Reagan's request to continue that support, the worst is that Democrats need to overcome their image of weakness. If Democrats vote no, writes Ben Wattenberg, head of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, "at a time when they are trying to show how tough they are, they will be demonstrating that they are still wimps."

On the other hand, if the Democrats vote yes, a nasty war will intensify and many people will die as a direct result. Perhaps this is naive, but I don't see why Nicaraguans should die so that the Democrats can improve their image. There are plenty of ways short of war to affect the course of events in Nicaragua. If we are going to supply the weapons and training for people to kill other people, and impose economic hardship and suffering on an entire nation, there ought to be a serious reason.

The best reason I've heard goes something like this. The Sandinista regime is denying freedom to its people, threatening the security of its neighbors, and extending the reach of our geopolitical rival, the Soviet Union. Three strikes. It would be better for Nicaragua, the region, and the United States if it was overthrown. The *contras* are attempting to achieve this. If the Sandinistas were foreign occupiers, we would have no trouble supporting indigenous rebels attempting to oust them, as we are doing in Afghanistan. Nor would anyone balk at supporting a democratic government against antidemocratic rebels. Why should it make such a big difference that the bad guys themselves are indigenous and already in power? The notion that "sovereignty" shouldn't stand in the way of our aiding "freedom fighters" has even been christened "the Reagan doctrine."

Most of the debate has focused on the factual premises of this argument, which are dubious. The Sandinistas favor Marxist-Leninist jargon, but Nicaragua is far from the "gulag" Reagan has called it. The Karl Marx postage stamp Vice President Bush has made much of turns out to be part of a series that includes George Washington. Administration propaganda has similarly exaggerated the size and intentions of Nicaragua's military buildup, which occurred after the Pentagon began a quite explicit "perception management" program to convince them we might invade.

As for the *contras*, they are hardly a true indigenous uprising, and it's far from clear that democracy is their ultimate goal. They are a CIA-packaged fighting force led by former officers of the dictator Somoza's National Guard, itself trained and armed for four decades by the United States. But forget all this for the moment. There's no question the Nicaraguan revolution hasn't turned out as we might like. Must fusty notions of "sovereignty" stay our hand?

Reagan's rhetoric has emphasized the best theoretical reason for violating a nation's sovereignty, which is simply to relieve the oppression of its people. Unfortunately, this is the least convincing explanation of America's actual motives in Nicaragua. There are many more vicious regimes around. Why aren't we supporting guerrillas in Guatemala? Or South Africa? Why, for that matter, did we shore up Somoza for so long?

Reagan's second ostensible *causus belli*—Nicaragua's alleged threat to its neighbors—also would keep us pretty busy if we applied the same standard around the world. What's more, it's clear that we could settle this thing tomorrow if all we wanted from the Sandinistas was a solid promise not to make trouble in the region.

This leaves the least attractive reason for fomenting murder and mayhem: naked geopolitics. The "Reagan doctrine" has been called an answer to the "Brezhnev doctrine," which holds that the Soviet Union may ignore national sovereignty to protect or expand its empire. In fact, the Reagan doctrine *is* the Brezhnev doctrine. It holds that a superpower can ignore national sover-

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TRANSFER DISAGREEMENT

To the editors:

It isn't every day that the son of Holocaust survivors and a member of the Chicago Herut Zionist Executive Committee is called an anti-Zionist. However, in Eric Breindel's near-hysterical review of my book *The Transfer Agreement: The Untold Story of the Secret Pact Between The Third Reich and Jewish Palestine* ("The Price of Rescue," February 18) anything is possible.

Breindel unfortunately has misread both history and my book. His lack of perspective about the period in question is demonstrated by his statement that the Transfer Agreement was negotiated "in a cruel world—a world Chaim Weizmann aptly described as 'divided into places where Jews cannot live and places into which they cannot enter.' " In fact, Weizmann's comment was describing the world of 1937, a world that had already seen four years of consolidated Hitlerism, a reoccupied Rhineland, the Nuremburg Laws, and doors of refuge everywhere slamming shut on Jews. But the Transfer Agreement was negotiated during early and mid 1933, during the first weeks of the Third Reich, with Hitler's regime prone and unconsolidated, with the world unsure what to expect, and with the doors of refuge open in many places.

Breindel also misunderstands, with great excitement, the use of the words "untold" and "secret" in the subtitle of my book. My book does not pretend to have discovered the Transfer Agreement—merely to have told for the first time the story behind this agonized arrangement.

Worse, Breindel links me with the anti-Zionist efforts of Arab propagandists, Soviet anti-Semites, and the anti-Zionist work of Lenni Brenner. This is so far from the truth, it is laughable. Indeed, Jewish leaders have felt that my book provided the precise document-by-document rebuttal to Brenner's distortions, and encouraged the distribution of my book overseas by Jewish and Zionist organizations.

As for misuse by the likes of Lyndon LaRouche and Louis Farrakhan, I can say this. LaRouche got the material from a close aide who is the son of the American Jewish Congress boycott leader from the 1930s. Farrakhan, ignorant of the Holocaust, was undoubtedly attracted to my book by hysterical mislabelings of it by the likes of Breindel. Absent that, Farrakhan undoubtedly would never have noticed.

But LaRouche, Farrakhan, and Breindel share this in common. I am unable to stop any of them if they want to distort my book into an anti-Zionist tract. The fact is that nearly all published anti-Zionist material is based upon the research from Holocaust and Zionist sources. I hope Breindel is not suggesting that we ban all Holocaust literature just because a few are willing to distort its content.

EDWIN BLACK
Chicago, Illinois

Eric Breindel replies:

Edwin Black's letter is as offensive as his book is pernicious. In seeming to fault my Chaim Weizmann citation, Black implies that in 1933 the world for German (and European) Jews was not yet a "cruel place." That the "doors of refuge [were] open in many places" at that time is additional nonsense—as well as a shameful historical misrepresentation. The year 1933 may indeed have been better, in some respects, than 1937; just as 1937 was, for would-be refugees, better than (post-British White Paper) 1939. Still, restrictive quotas were, from the outset, universal; and European Jews, including German Jews of limited financial means, faced increasingly brutal anti-Semitism at home as well as a world of closed, or closing, doors. "Cruel" hardly seems too strong a term.

As to the embrace of his book by Minister Louis Farrakhan and Lyndon LaRouche: this can scarcely be attributed to me. I offered my assessment of Black's work well after these individuals expressed their enthusiasm for his conclusions. I would suggest that Mr. Black look not to the reviews of his book to learn why anti-Semites are ecstatic over it, but look simply to the book itself.

I fully understand Black's desire to distinguish himself from his new admirers. But as the child of a Holocaust survivor, I don't happen to consider being "the son of Holocaust survivors" any particular credential.

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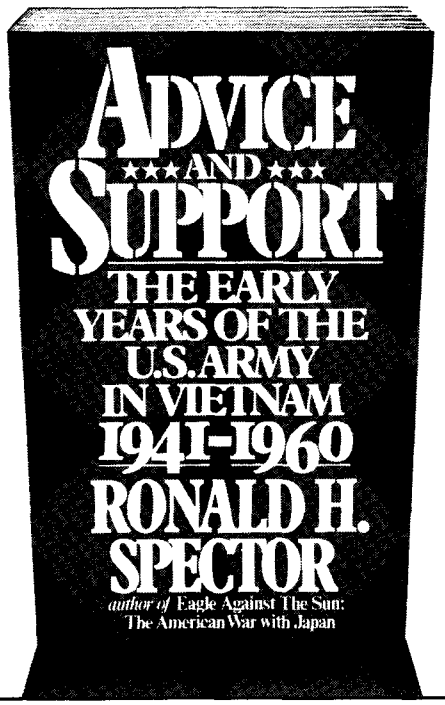

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
APRIL 29, 1985

THE MYTHS OF REVOLUTION

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—war, death, famine, and pestilence—have always ridden stirrup to stirrup. In history, of course, the first of these has usually paced the grim tetrad. But in the late 20th century, when the horseman of war rides to victory as a revolutionary warrior, he is usually joined by another rider: official terror. It is a destiny at once more purposive and more arbitrary, more relentless and more morally presumptive, than any other to which masses of people are in our time condemned. It is what happened in the wake of the Indochinese wars.

The memory of what followed in Vietnam and in Cambodia, forfeited to communism ten years ago this month, should deny to the idea of revolution once and for all that automatic cachet with which it has won many victories for the minds of enlightened men and women in the West. One of the painful ironies much experienced in our time is that these victories were won precisely among people ordinarily sensitive to tyranny who should have intuitively grasped that the greatest evils would be committed in the name of great ends. Thus by now it is these ends that must fall under scrutiny, lest misplaced enthusiasms for anything that dubs itself a revolution or a national liberation struggle once again lead us to cheer what we will soon lament.

In two ways, at least, the peace movement as a whole was distinctively American in its innocence: it had little historical perspective; and it believed and acted (or was led to act) without adequately considering the consequences—innocence would be enough. Among liberal and socialist opponents of the war there were many whose anti-communism was as deeply felt as anybody's anti-communism, including that of the quite bellicose supporters of the war who had not before been notably touched by the struggles of other peoples for freedom. These critics of the massive U.S. military presence in Indochina (we count ourselves among them, and much of their criticism was published in these pages) were morally and intellectually serious, their calculus of means and ends scrupulous.

Still, there were many who were less scrupulous. There were many who actually welcomed the triumph of communism in Indochina. There were some who knew that the regimen of the new order would inevitably impose additional and excruciating suffering on the Vietnamese and Cambodian peoples—though probably even these partisans of revolution couldn't quite imagine what depredations the Khmer Rouge intended for their countrymen. A few of them refused to imagine their scope even after Cambodia had been turned into a charnel house. Such American activists—Communists, fellow travelers, student and faculty club revolutionaries—may not have comprised enormous numbers, but they were pivotal on the campuses and off, and in the culture generally, setting and distorting the agenda of a movement partly fueled by a pathological national self-loathing and already intoxicated by its capacity to create domestic chaos.

Both types of war critics—again joined without wanting to be—have recently come under renewed fire. It is part of an effort to conjure up in retrospect a war that would have been winnable and popularly supported and morally justifiable in both its purposes and methods. From the long-range strategic point of view, the effort to review the tactics of engagement with guerrilla armies and their suppliers is unexceptionable: we or our allies will doubtless face such adversaries again. But such adversaries will already have learned from the Vietnam experience that if they are fanatical enough and seem unyielding enough there will be plenty of Americans who will argue that they are not be be resisted at all. Thus the victory of the implacable becomes irresistible: zeal becomes its own reward, and perversely even an index of justice.

Whatever one ultimately thought about the war's purposes, two things are now clear: it began unpropitiously and ended dishonorably. If we are to believe Kennedy administration officials who later turned against the war, the president who started it all was not himself really for it either. As for Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, he made it almost impossible for a self-respecting demos to support the war policy. And by the time Richard Nixon came to power, the newly converted antiwar Democrats had set their hearts not simply on American withdrawal but on American flight, so much so that the complicated di-

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plomacy of a complicated peace (which would have been the only appropriate kind of peace) was forcibly foreclosed.

Instead, once the peace agreement had been signed and our troops withdrawn, the antiwar movement clamored successfully for an end to all aid to the South Vietnamese government (whose separate existence was explicitly ensured in the treaty) and also to the government of Cambodia under siege by the Khmer Rouge, then more than amply supplied by both the Soviets and the Chinese. The refusal of Congress to continue to assist these governments may not have been the decisive turning points in the two parallel Indochina wars. But in these decisions, concrete choices were made: to have the South Vietnamese forces submit to the North Vietnamese Communists, and to have Lon Nol's regime in Phnom Penh fall to Pol Pot's revolutionaries. On what moral calculus were these decisions made? And, given what we know today, on what calculus are they to be defended?

"GIVE PEACE a chance" was the answer then, and for many it would still suffice today. Of course, we did bring peace to ourselves; we withdrew. For the people of Indochina, however, peace never had a chance. The past ten years have been ten years of unending war. War between neighboring countries. And wars of governments against their own populations: concentration camps and "reeducation" camps and forced starvation and transfers of populations and mass expulsions of politically and ethnically undesirable elements—methodical terror of just the sort one would expect from regimes that adorned their offices with portraits of Stalin. Most of us were not prepared for any of this. Worse yet, most of us denied that it was likely. It was not the only one of our mistakes. In fact, the received version of the war turns out to be one big series of interrelated and mutually reinforcing mistakes. It is important to review these mistakes. Not because such a review will persuade us retroactively to support the war; it won't, and shouldn't. These mistakes, rather, reflect habits of mind that in a dangerous world tempt us with false choices: war or peace, dictatorship or fellowship, corruption or revolutionary asceticism.

It is now nearly 50 years since Joseph Schumpeter shrewdly analyzed the hostility shown by the elites of advanced capitalism to their own societies. He did not adequately discern that this hostility would lead the same people to idealize the enemies of their societies. (How could he, a refugee from Nazism, have contemplated such an intellectual and moral perversion?) But it is precisely what happened in the postwar world, and the process was hastened in the ambit of the Vietnamese war. For if we were wrong, it somehow followed that the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese must be right. And not just right concerning ultimate justice, but also concerning the facts on the ground. To be sure, this tendency to trust the adversary was intensified by the ample reasons our own government gave its citizens for distrust. Washington was not candid with the people or even with itself. Still, it is not explanation enough.

Central to the peace movement's argument, for example, was the claim that the insurgency in South Vietnam was largely indigenous and that Hanoi was at most marginally involved. In March 1965, I.F. Stone allowed that in 1964 there had been "a total of six Northern infiltrees." How he ridiculed American charges of a significant Hanoi military presence in the South. Such ridicule and denial became staples of the antiwar case, repeated from coast to coast with ever greater confidence, even when U.S. forces were already locked in fierce combat with Hanoi's.

There can no longer be much argument about the facts. Stanley Karnow's brilliantly balanced and authoritative study, *Vietnam: A History*, tells us (and his sources are unimpeachable) that "by the fall of 1964, northern troops infiltrating into the south were enlarging the Vietcong contingents" and providing them with capacities they never had before. Moreover, marching orders came not from secret hideouts, but directly "from the Communist hierarchy in Hanoi." By then a complete North Vietnamese regiment was already fighting in the South. More to the point: "Preparations to send North Vietnamese troops south had begun long before Lyndon Johnson seriously considered the introduction of American battalions . . . the North Vietnamese were engaged in battle against Saigon government detachments months before the U.S. marines splashed ashore at Danang." Karnow believes that this information has "dispelled the myth . . . that the Vietcong was essentially an indigenous and autonomous insurgent movement." He may be right. But has the information dispelled the reputations of the myth makers?

The legend of the independence of the National Liberation Front was not, in any case, one that would really be buttressed or corroded by the facts of Northern arms and men at war in the South. It was a matter of poetry and of faith. Tales of disillusion are painful to read and hear. There is by now a significant literature of disillusion, not so much by Western supporters of the Vietcong as by Vietnamese militants themselves. None of these accounts pretends that the governments of South Vietnam were anything but what they were: corrupt, despotic, decadent, their own worst enemies, implausible saviors of democracy. But the most recent of them, *A Vietcong Memoir* (published this month by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) by Truong Nhu Tang, a founder of the NLF and minister of justice in the Provisional Revolutionary Government, is a particularly searing narrative of Front cynicism, deception, and hideous brutality. It also shows how deluded the U.S. peace movement was in its desperately unswerving conviction that the Front was eager to be a partner in some third or middle way for South Vietnam.

On the contrary, in just one instance out of many, when there was an opening for a third force, in the possible candidacy of "Big" Minh against President Thieu, the Front maneuvered as frantically as Thieu did to prevent it. And when the Front called for a coalition government, what it intended was exactly what the Communists of Eastern Europe intended by coalition after 1945. Not that there weren't some middle-of-the-roaders in the NLF; they just never had a chance. Readers of *Viet Cong* by Douglas Pike (published

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back in 1966) would have understood that, but there weren't many readers of *Viet Cong*, a book out of time for its scholarly refusal to be inspirational about the revolutionaries. At any rate, the Front died an ignoble death shortly after the fall of Saigon. With it also finally died the hope that its existence had cruelly sustained: that of some autonomy, some recognition of difference, for South Vietnam.

It was an important hope, or rather an important delusion, for it kept people from focusing on the realities in North Vietnam. If anyone was ever so impolite as to raise the grim matter of these realities in peace movement circles, the concern was almost invariably dismissed as irrelevant. Still, the specter of North Vietnam's bloody experience with Communism hovered over the conflict in the South. After all, there had been massacres upon the defeat of the French; and one million people escaped to the South, voting with their feet, the only vote they'd be allowed. Thus, idealization was once again in order. Even so sturdy and veteran an anti-communist as Mary McCarthy somehow was able to discern in Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam something of what her mentor Hannah Arendt had seen in George Washington's America. She was not alone in accomplishing that considerable intellectual feat, and it was one that exerted influence. But instead of the gentle "bicycle socialism" that she envisioned, united Vietnam turned out to be a rapacious imperium in its own right while simultaneously doing chores for Communism's metropolitan power—a queer sort of colonialized imperialism. The dream is dead.

One reason it is dead is that the once widely held certainty that a socialized economy is the most effective path to modernization and prosperity in the Third World is no longer a certainty at all. Genuine democratic socialists, of course, weren't willing to countenance tyranny as a necessary cost of development. Yet those who believed that socialism was the answer may have been willing to overlook the brutality of its most draconian form, or to extenuate its harshness. Even a nonsocialist critic of the war as hardheaded as Hans J. Morgenthau gave the Vietnamese Communists that much: with their impatience for industrialization, they were on the right track economically, certainly when compared to the successive complaisant authoritarianisms in the South. But with the worldwide disintegration of the various socialist models of economic planning, communism has lost its last and, in any event, least organic moral prop. Communist regimes are to be judged now not by what they promise, not by what the founders of the socialist doctrine envisioned, but by how their people live and are ruled.

When it came to Indochina, those lives and that rule proved to be particularly hideous. Before the Khmer Rouge instituted its regime of radical evil, Anthony Lewis put forward the proposition that nothing "could be more terrible than the reality of what is happening in Cambodia now." An Asian holocaust based not on revenge but on ideology was something he could scarcely contemplate. Another *New York Times* columnist, Sydney Schanberg, with his obsessive blaming of the Cambodian catastrophe on Henry Kissinger, cannot contemplate it yet. This is a paradigmatic impoverishment of the progressive imagination: nothing the revolutionaries do could possibly be worse than what we do. But as Prince Sihanouk recently told interviewers in *The New York Review of Books*, the Khmer Rouge leadership had planned the vast Cambodian death happening as a social purgative when they were still expatriate students in Paris.

Returning from a five-day trip to Vietnam in 1976, Senator George McGovern wrote in *The Nation* that the outcome "may not be what we would have chosen for the Vietnamese, but it was their country and choice, not ours. It may not be the best of all possible Western worlds, but it is far better than our Presidents warned it would be and infinitely better than endless war." These are the words of a political ingenue—or of a consummate cynic. Did McGovern and those for whom he spoke really believe that the Vietnamese had made a choice? Was the outcome truly "far better" than what our presidents warned it would be? How would he now characterize the situation in Indochina other than as one of "endless war"?

COULD ANY of this have been prevented? Quite possibly not. Six years ago, Irving Howe and Michael Walzer wrote in these pages, "The U.S. sent its troops into Vietnam to reverse the verdict of a local struggle, which meant, in turn, imposing a ghastly death and suffering upon the Vietnamese. As it turned out, the U.S. could not reverse that verdict finally; it could only delay its culmination." (August 18, 1979.) It would be hard to persuade that there was a possibly happier ending. Still, we should be haunted by the way we deserted men and women who clung to us out of conviction or out of innocence, even men and women who clung to us out of avarice or just plain fear. They were not worse than their enemies, not Diem or Ky or Thieu. Moreover, they were nationalists. Certainly they were if one measures their nationalism against the much vaunted nationalism of the Communists who turn out to be Jaruzelski-style nationalists.

Our allies in South Vietnam and in Cambodia were not worthy allies. And it was they who lost the war to the Communists. There is a paradox here: the Communists won the war by their resort to systematic brutality; the anti-Communists lost it by their resort to capricious brutality. Nonetheless, there was something unseemly in our haste to deny them that last measure of assistance in 1975 that might have enabled them to establish some position of strength from which they could bargain with the enemy. At a minimum, some tens of thousands more might have been able to escape.

Unavoidably, over the long run there will be conflicts in the Third World in which the U.S. will be engaged; the Soviets and their clients will not refrain—détente or no détente—from testing us in many places. Unavoidably too, we will be far more chary about a commitment of troops, and it is right that we should be. We will have to be more selective in our choice of allies; they will have to be far more worthy and also more reliable. Otherwise the last

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American helicopter lifting off from the embassy in Saigon will become the permanent symbol of our foreign policy. Finally, it will be unavoidable that some administrations will move toward an intervention that will be wrong and wrongheaded, or simply futile. Maybe Nicaragua is just such a case; and maybe the administration prevaricates much like previous administrations did about Vietnam. Ronald Reagan's idealization of the *contras* certainly suggests that even he knows that his case cannot be built on the facts alone. If any of this is so, there are legitimate grounds for argument and opposition.

But there is already a richly elaborated romanticization of the Sandinistas, much like the romanticization of the Vietnamese and Cambodian Communists. Some of the romanticists are the same, or are their spiritual children. They muster the identical myths of origins for the revolution and identical myths of mission. They tell us about happy and determined peasants, always with a rising literacy rate. We are given the same breathless tour reports from the front of nobility and simplicity and sacrifice. But today the reports ring hollow. This is the tenth anniversary of the solidification of Communist dominion over Indochina. In memory of the millions killed and persecuted in Vietnam and Cambodia during this decade of "peace," let us remind ourselves that in no country that has so enchanted so many American enthusiasts of other peoples' revolutions has there ever been a happy ending.

TIRADE SURPLUS

America's trade deficit with Japan has grown to $37 billion, and Congress is mad. Both the House and the Senate have passed resolutions asking President Reagan to slap import controls on Japan unless the Japanese open their markets to American goods. Republican Robert Packwood, who chairs the Senate Finance Committee, crudely told *The Washington Post*, "If they are not going to be fair to us, I hate to think that what we are coming to is an eye for an eye, but apparently that is the only language they understand." Even uglier imagery is being used elsewhere, as the trade dispute taps latent reserves of xenophobia and anti-Asian sentiment. At a recent Democratic Party retreat in West Virginia, Lee Iacocco, the chairman of Chrysler, suggested that the Japanese were a greater menace to America than the Soviets.

It is hard for U.S. manufacturing companies to break into the Japanese market. Japanese industry depends on a complex and firmly entrenched network of local suppliers that is difficult for foreigners to penetrate. Japan built its economy on an export-or-die ethic, and it stigmatizes imports. The Japanese often submit foreign goods to lengthy and expensive quality-control tests. But Japan is more of a free trader than is generally recognized. According to a recent article by Nicholas Kristof in *The New York Times*, Japan's average tariff on industrial imports will soon be lower than that of the United States or the Common Market. Kristof cites a study by economist William Cline of the Institute for International Economics that shows that Japan puts nontariff controls like voluntary quotas on only half as many manufactured imports as the United States does.

"Retaliation" against Japan would hurt us as much as it hurts them. Protectionism raises prices. It saves jobs, but at a huge cost. Robert Crandall of the Brookings Institution has estimated that the recently discarded "voluntary" auto import quotas cost American consumers $160,000 for every job they saved. (And the auto workers whose jobs were saved made more money than most of the people who had to pay higher prices for their cars.) Also, all those Walkmen and Accords and VCRs are things Americans want, so we work harder and more productively in order to buy them.

Presumably the idea behind retaliating against the Japanese is to force them to the bargaining table, where across-the-board free trade would be restored. Import controls, in this line of thinking, are like MX missiles: we'll build them now in order to dismantle them later. But the businesses that benefit from our tariffs are not the same as the ones that are harmed by theirs. They lock out oranges, we lock out steel. So once one side or the other initiates tariffs, political pressures within the two countries push them toward a trade war, not trade disarmament.

If we want to pressure Japan into making its markets more open to American products, we should demand that they start paying for their own military defense. But not, as some have been suggesting, by imposing a defense tax on their imports—that's just as self-defeating as any other tariff. We should simply insist that they pay for their own military, or we can send them a bill. In fact, this would be a good idea whether we have a trade deficit or not. We devote over six percent of our GNP to the military; Japan, about one percent. We spend millions figuring out how to make more accurate missiles; they spend their research and development money on better consumer products and more efficient industrial processes.

Meanwhile, the best way to bolster U.S. exports is to bring down the value of the dollar. A big reason the dollar is now overvalued is that foreigners have bid up its price—they need the cash to buy Treasury bonds we sell to finance our deficit. So a good way to deflate the dollar is to cut the deficit. Getting huffy about Japan couldn't possibly be Congress's way of making up for its failure to tackle that problem, could it?

NOTEBOOK

□ LORD HELP US: At a talk during a recent fund-raising stop in Dayton, Ohio, the *Dayton Daily News* reports, Jerry Falwell thought to entertain his audience by recounting a conversation he'd had not long ago. It seems a "Jewish, liberal, feminist lesbian" had approached him and criti-

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cized his position on abortion. "She looked like the Lord made her as ugly as he could . . . and then scared her. She was so big she could have played linebacker for Ohio State. I told her, 'Of all the people in the room, you have no reason to worry about abortion,' " he explained.

□ THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME, especially if you own it, and make more than $50,000 a year. According to a National League of Cities study, tax breaks give home owners almost four times the housing "subsidy" that low- and moderate-income families receive through federal housing programs. Here's an example. If your annual income is under $10,000, you get $257 from the government and a $74 tax write-off for housing. If your annual income is $50,000 or more, you receive no direct government subsidy, but your average tax write-off is $1,866. This year $41.4 billion will be passed along to home owners in the form of federal income tax deductions for mortgage interest, property taxes, and other home owner costs. Just $10.6 billion will go to direct-aid housing programs. Here's a fairness issue for aspiring Democrats.

□ SOCIALIST RECONSTRUCTION: Soviet students of the English language lucky enough to obtain a special edition of the Oxford English Dictionary published in Moscow will find some novel definitions of key political words. For example, the dictionary defines "socialism" as a "social and economic system which is replacing capitalism." "Capitalism" is the system "replacing feudalism and preceding communism." Other highlights: "Imperialism, the highest and last stage of capitalism." "Fascism, a . . . bourgeois movement and regime, typical of the era of imperialism."

□ NEW REPUBLIC READERS may remember a series of articles entitled "The American House of Saud," which appeared in these pages in 1982. Written by Steven Emerson, they detailed the heavily veiled connections between the Saudi Arabian oil sheikhs and American economic, political, and educational institutions. Emerson has spent the last few years pursuing the matters he first described here, and has now produced a lively and compelling book full of fresh revelations, also called *The American House of Saud* (Franklin Watts). It will be shocking to even the most jaded readers.

□ TEN YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: " 'Probably the only people who have the historical sense of inevitable victory are Americans,' said the late Denis Brogan. That was before Vietnam. America never lost a war, we said. Before Vietnam. Given a chance, we believed, any nation would spring to accept our goals and ideals. Before Vietnam. In short, watching the long tragedy in living color has been a chastening experience, but the act of bravery is to face up to it. I see no loss of nerve in Washington; only a great sadness and maybe the dawn of a new maturity—a coming of age." (TRB from Washington, "Great Blunders," April 26, 1975.)

Coming around to the noble cause.

MY CHANGE OF HEART

I CAN'T TELL you what I was doing when I heard that President John F. Kennedy had been shot, but I remember exactly where I was the day Vietnam fell. Or at least the day after. I was sitting in Kay's coffee shop near the White House reading *The New York Times*. Its coverage of the events in Vietnam was thorough that day, and I read every word. After an hour or so, a thought suddenly occurred to me, namely that the Communist victory in Vietnam was a very, very bad thing—indeed, the worst of all possible fates for Vietnam. And I recalled, from having read *Cold Friday* many years before, the apocalyptic phrase Whittaker Chambers had used to characterize the triumph of communism. "The great nightfall," he called it.

Now, the thought that Vietnam would suffer horrendously under communism was neither profound nor original; people whose views I despised, like George Meany and Joseph Alsop, had been saying this for years. But for me, at any rate, it was new. I had opposed the American effort in Vietnam. My opposition wasn't as passionate as that of the Berrigan brothers or Tom Hayden, but it was strong enough. I participated in the 1967 march on the Pentagon in which Norman Mailer got arrested (I didn't). A year or two later, I arranged for an antiwar group to use my proxy for a few shares of Boeing stock I owned so it could denounce the company at a stockholders' meeting. I voted for the most fervently antiwar candidates, which meant Dick Gregory in 1968 and George McGovern in 1972.

And I bought the conventional wisdom of the day. During a long evening in 1966, I sought to persuade a distant cousin that the whole struggle in Vietnam was a civil war. He was an Army captain, a West Pointer, and he had spent a year as a military adviser in Vietnam. He was unconvinced; I was adamant. They're all Vietnamese, the government troops and the Vietcong, aren't they? That makes it a civil war that the United States has no business getting involved in. I pointed out that preserving the corrupt South Vietnamese government was not worth a single American life. I always cited the supposed suppression of Buddhism, the stifling of dissent and the practice—I must have read about this somewhere—of American troops routinely handing over Vietcong prisoners to South Vietnamese soldiers, who immediately executed the prisoners. But my root argument against the war was one of moral equivalence. The government of South Vietnam was brutal and undemocratic. And although the Vietcong and its allies weren't pussycats, they surely couldn't be worse.

Well, I was wrong. There was something worse that could happen to Vietnam, to Indochina, than having American troops on the ground or a discredited government that was supported, financially and morally, by the United States. What is worse is what has happened. Why couldn't I foresee this at the time? For one thing, the

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horror of the combat overshadowed everything else—Khe Sanh, Hué, the Tet offensive. As a reporter for *The Washington Star*, I wrote a piece about a young man from my hometown (Arlington, Virginia) who had been killed in Vietnam. His death seemed senseless, all the more so every time I read a newspaper story about corruption in South Vietnam. And various administrations in Washington never offered a compelling principle that justified military intervention. Ward off the Chicoms? That was preposterous. Save an embryonic democracy? Come on.

True, I was not alone in being so mistaken. Nearly everyone I knew thought the American policy in Vietnam was at best misguided. Millions of people opposed to the war voiced the same clichés I did. Yet now that these have proved to be illusory—now that we know about the holocaust in Cambodia and "reeducation" camps in Vietnam and the boat people and the refusal of the North Vietnamese to give the South Vietnamese a role in their own government—only a handful of politicians have second-guessed the antiwar position. It is as if opposing the war was an end in itself, something laudable regardless of what transpired in its aftermath.

No group has been less reflective than the press. When I was on a fellowship at Harvard University in the late seventies, a prominent American reporter, Richard Dudman of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, delivered a talk there on his impressions of Vietnam under communism. He'd just returned from a tour, and he was cautiously enthusiastic. The country was poor but on the move. As I recall it, he said he'd been taken to a reeducation camp, and surprisingly enough the inmates didn't appear too unhappy over their imprisonment. They were coming around, starting to accept the new system.

DURING THE WAR, American press coverage tended to substantiate antiwar clichés. One reason was access; reporters had access to American officials and soldiers, not to Vietcong or North Vietnamese ones. My Lai, where 170-odd civilians were killed by U.S. troops, became a household word; Hué, where the Vietcong murdered 3,000 civilians, didn't. Repression and corruption and chaos in South Vietnam were well covered; the same among the Vietcong and North Vietnamese wasn't. For all its investigative prowess, the press never uncovered the fundamental nature of the Vietcong as a wholly owned subsidiary of North Vietnam.

But the press's most egregious error was the miscoverage of the 1968 Tet offensive. It was treated as a breathtaking defeat for the South Vietnamese and Americans, an indication of the shocking power of the Vietcong. This, we now know, was not the real story. In truth, the Vietcong suffered a disastrous defeat during Tet, just as General William Westmoreland claimed. One journalist who was in Saigon at the time, Peter Braestrup, has shown in his two-volume study *Big Story* just how the press blew the Tet story.

You don't hear many apologies, though. Certainly not from Walter Cronkite, whose fresh-from-Vietnam report on Tet that the war was unwinnable shocked President Johnson and led him to believe that the American people were fed up with the war. "All that optimism, and here were the Vietcong right in the city of Saigon," Cronkite told *Newsweek* recently. "You know, that was what kind of turned so many of us at that point into saying: 'Come on, now. This is the end. Stop it.' " If Walter Cronkite has learned nothing, neither has his former colleague Harry Reasoner. "I am not a dupe," Reasoner told Stephen Lesher, author of *Media Unbound*. ". . . But to say that this was somehow an American cum South Vietnamese victory that the press concealed, I think is arrant nonsense." It isn't concealment the press has been accused of, but of misreporting the pivotal military engagement of the war. Reasoner said of those who made this charge, "They're wrong."

Reasoner's act of denial is small compared to that of leaders of the antiwar movement. Who among them has acknowledged the torture of American POWs in North Vietnam, which was an early indication of how the North Vietnamese might act once ensconced in Saigon? Who among them has been willing to suggest that the murder of a million or more Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge might have been averted if American military force had not been removed from Indochina? If any of them spoke out this way, I missed it. But I did hear Noam Chomsky seek to prove the Cambodian genocide hadn't happened.

In a forum on Vietnam in the April issue of *Harper's*, Peter Marin, billed as "a novelist and essayist who has written on the moral and cultural issues raised by the Vietnam war," took another tack when conservative George Gilder declared the holocaust in Cambodia is "what happens when a country is lost to communism." Marin objected: "That's much too simple a view. The effects of Vietnam are more tragic, and less ideological, than that. Many Americans are smart enough to realize that while our withdrawal from Vietnam had certain tragic consequences, our presence, had we remained there, would have led to a different, and equally tragic, set of consequences." Just as tragic as the mountains of corpses in Cambodia and the thousands upon thousands of Vietnamese boat people swallowed by the South China Sea? That is inconceivable, and it is also unknowable.

You know you're a repentant dove when you start agreeing with Ronald Reagan on Vietnam. I was covering his presidential campaign for the Baltimore *Sun* in August 1980 when Reagan told the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention that American involvement in Vietnam had been "a noble cause." Naturally, this prompted reporters covering Reagan to write that he had committed a gaffe. I didn't quite see it that way. If Reagan meant that the United States intervened despite having little to gain except the containment of communist expansion and the protection of countries that might evolve into democracies some day, I'd say he was just about right. But noble or not, the American effort was better than the alternative.

FRED BARNES

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It wasn't cowardice that made us quit.

WHY THE WAR WAS IMMORAL

BY HENDRIK HERTZBERG

WAS THE WAR in Vietnam wrong? Not just inadvisable, not just a costly mistake, but morally wrong? How one answers that depends partly, I guess, on how one experienced the war and the opposition to it. A few days ago, at the university where I'm spending a semester, I found myself deep in conversation with a tutor in the philosophy department, an intense, articulate man five or six years younger than I am. (I'm 41.) We were talking about our experiences in the antiwar movement—ten and 15 and nearly 20 years ago—and he said that when he looks back on that time he feels mostly a kind of angry regret. He had been a member of Students for a Democratic Society when SDS dropped its homegrown ideology of participatory democracy in favor of mindless Maoism; he had chanted, "Ho! Ho! Ho Chi Minh! NLF is gonna win!"; he had longed for the triumph of the forces of "liberation" not only in Vietnam but everywhere in the Third World and ultimately at home; he had spelled it Amerika and dismissed its political system—"bourgeois democracy"—as a hoax, a cover for racism and imperialism. When the war ended and Indochina vanished into blood-soaked totalitarianism (instead of the gentle egalitarianism he had expected), he was wrenchingly disillusioned. Gradually he discovered that the "revolutionary socialism" of the Third World is brutal, that the Soviet Union is armed and dangerous, that for all its flaws American democracy is the moral superior of any form of communism. "I was wrong, just totally wrong," he told me. Last year he voted for Reagan.

I was luckier. I happened to have been brought up in a political and moral atmosphere of left-wing anti-communism. Reared on Orwell, Gandhi, and Silone, it was no great trick for me to avoid the more blatant naïvetés of New Leftism, and thus also to avoid the subsequent disillusionments. I took my antiwar arguments from Theodore Draper, not Noam Chomsky; from *Commentary* (yes, *Commentary*) and *The New Republic*, not the *National Guardian* and *Monthly Review*. I was similarly lucky in my encounter with military service. Opposed to what was then still called the "Vietnam policy," yet not so fiercely opposed as to be willing to risk prison, and too straight to dodge the draft, I signed up at the end of 1966 for a three-year hitch in the Navy. I asked to be sent to Vietnam, figuring a desk job in Saigon would be interesting without being unduly risky, but was sent—catch-22—to a sleepy shore billet in New York instead. Two years later I *was* ordered to Vietnam (desk job in Da Nang); but by then my antiwar convictions had grown so strong I preferred jail to further military service, and I announced my intention to refuse the orders. I hoped for antiwar martyrdom; instead, quite by chance, a medical difficulty developed, and I was hastily mustered out. I'd managed to have it both ways: veteran (sort of), and resister (in a way). In the Navy and after, I campaigned for Bobby Kennedy and Allard Lowenstein and other antiwar politicians; went on all the marches; hung around the office of a lively little pacifist weekly, *Win*, whose editor had two stickers on the bumper of his Volkswagen: US OUT OF VIETNAM and RUSSIA OUT OF LATVIA. But I didn't join any of what the inimitable Norman Podhoretz calls (in *Why We Were in Vietnam*) "the three main currents of the 'antiwar' movement": pro-Communist, anti-anti-Communist, and anti-American. I guess that I (along with more prominent opponents of the war, such as Podhoretz himself) must have joined one of the non-main currents. Perhaps it was the current that cheered when Norman Thomas, whom I had been taught to revere and who never disappointed, advised the movement to wash the flag, not burn it.

It's no surprise that the differences over Vietnam, rooted as they are in such different experiences, persist in the form of different histories remembered, different lessons learned. The war turned my tutor friend into a "communist" and me into a pacifist. A decade later, neither of us is what we were. We are merely a Republican and a Democrat, passing the time in earnest conversation. And I still think the war was immoral. So when my tutor friend told me the story of his days in the movement, I readily agreed with him that he had been wrong. "It could have been worse, though," I added. "You could have *supported* the war."

There were always two main arguments in favor of the war, the geopolitical and the "moral." The war's aftermath has undermined the first argument, but has seemingly strengthened the second. For the aftermath proved to be at once worse than the war's opponents had predicted and better than its supporters had feared—worse for the Indochinese, better for everyone else.

The geopolitical argument took many forms, some of which lay in ruins long before the war ended. The notion that the war was needed to stop Sino-Soviet expansionism, for example, had become an embarrassment well before Nixon arrived in Peking. So had the notion that the war was needed to convince the Chinese to abandon revolu-

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THE LOST GENERATION GAP

EVERY WAR draws attention to youth, but Vietnam did it in an odd way. Two distinct groups of young people competed for attention each night on the TV news and each day in the press. First, there were the soldiers: on patrol in Quang Tri or poking through the rubble at My Lai. But images of the young people who stayed at home remain just as vivid: a woman crying over the body of a student shot by the National Guard at Kent State or protestors slipping flowers into guardsmen's rifle muzzles at the Pentagon. Leafing through newspapers and magazines from the period, it seems that the war about the war got more attention than the war itself.

Did either war reach the grade-school children of the sixties? Vietnam is supposed to have been the war that invaded our living rooms. Americans turned against U.S. involvement, it is said, because they saw its horrors on TV every evening. Since the war itself touched relatively few people (the soldiers and their families made up a small minority of the U.S. population), the supposed "national trauma" of Vietnam had its origin in American homes. And in 1970 children between the ages of six and 11 watched an average of 26 hours of television per week. The horrific images, though, evidently left no impression on them.

By 1980 the "generation gap" had disappeared, and the magazine trend-writers were beginning to talk about "the conservative student." That spring, President Carter decided to reinstate draft registration, and as a freshman in college, I took part in heated discussions about the morality of compulsory military service. Yet even though it was only five years after the fall of Saigon, the subject of Vietnam barely entered into these talks. Despite a few vivid memories, the war was already as alien to us personally as World War II or Korea.

By all reports this is true nationwide. I recently took an informal survey among young visitors at Washington's Vietnam Memorial. I spoke with 30 people between the ages of 16 and 25, all of whom had some college education or were planning on it, and all of whom remembered seeing the war on television. When asked about their sharpest memories of the period, nearly all of them mentioned the macabre ritual in which network anchormen announced the body count each week. Everyone remembered the POWs coming home. But of the 30, only seven knew what the Tet offensive was. The same number had heard of Kent State. Five people had heard of My Lai. Nobody knew what the initials SDS stood for. Twelve people thought that "the Vietnam War" was fought by the U.S. against Vietnam.

I remember a lot about Vietnam, but my memories too are isolated fragments. They have little to do with the horrors of the war. On Moratorium Day, when I was six, the seniors in my private New York City day school gave out black arm bands to the first graders. I remember the bemusement on my teachers' faces at the sight of us; I don't remember a thing about the moratorium. I didn't connect the event with Vietnam, but rather with the "generation gap" everyone was talking about. Despite hearing about the war constantly during my childhood, from television and student protests and adult conversations, the war had no real impact on me. Keith Barth, a 19-year-old from Nevada whom I spoke with at the Vietnam monument, said, "I was really confused when my parents said we were at war. It didn't seem like that. You couldn't exactly walk down the streets and notice it."

This is not to say that Vietnam is now without meaning for people under 30. The organizers of the recent demonstrations for divestiture at Harvard and Columbia consciously modeled themselves on their antiwar predecessors, hoping to recapture the solidarity—and the success—of the late sixties. And the young conservative at the Vietnam Memorial who called the war "the greatest defeat inflicted on America by the press" might well have modeled himself on General Westmoreland.

But what such conventionally differing opinions suggest is that the meaning Vietnam has for our generation derives largely from the experience of others. A 1983 CBS-*New York Times* poll showed that 16 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds thought that "the U.S. did the right thing" in Vietnam, as opposed to 77 percent who thought we should have stayed out. These figures closely mimic those of the population as a whole, which split 14 percent and 77 percent.

My generation, in short, did not learn about Vietnam from those who fought it or those who had friends and relatives who fought it. It is well-known that more 18- to 25-year-old men spent the war on university campuses than in Vietnam, leaving the fighting to a disproportionately poor and black minority. The war divided the United States as much between soldiers and college students as between young and old, "hawks" and "doves." And the divisions ran unequally, sparing most people at the expense of a few. The fact that so many children passed unaffected through this war helps explain the lack of a "generation gap" today. But it is also deeply disturbing. It shows that the real "trauma" of Vietnam, despite all the attention in the media this week, remains only partly experienced.

DAVID A. BELL

tion and follow the Soviet example of peaceful coexistence.

The most persistent form of the geopolitical argument was the domino theory. Some of the war's retrospective defenders maintain that the fall of Cambodia and Laos proves that the theory was correct. Not so. Cambodia and Laos were Vietnam battlefields long before the Americans arrived, and by the end the three countries became one domino. Anyway, the domino theory always encompassed more than Indochina. Even in its most modest version it envisaged the loss of all Southeast Asia, which is to say Thailand, Burma, and Malaysia. And in its more grandiose form it predicted that Indonesia, India, Australia, and Hawaii would topple too. None of this has happened; on the contrary, the American position in Asia and the Pacific is stronger now than it was before 1975. Such troubles as do exist there, such as instability in the Philip-

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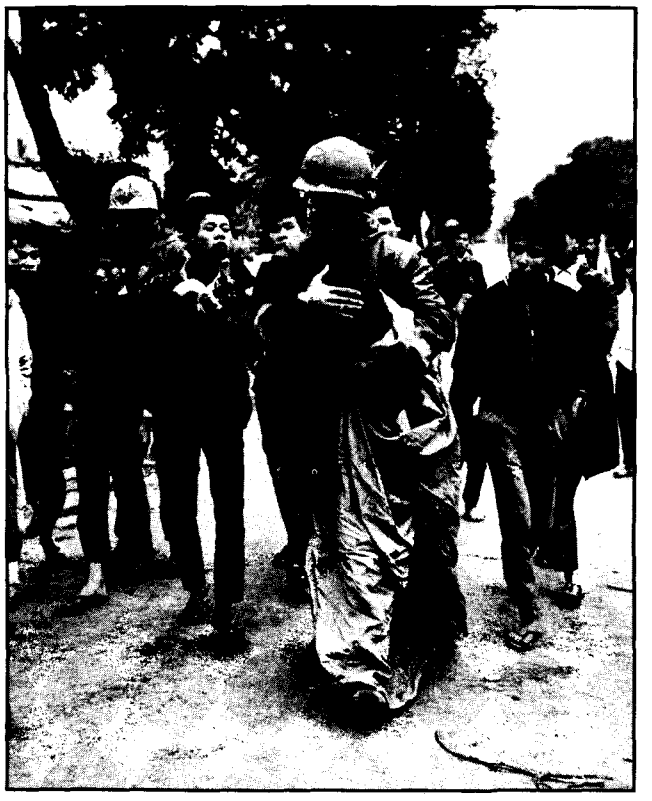
pines, cannot remotely be traced to the defeat in Vietnam.

A milder corollary to the domino theory was the argument from will: we needed to go on fighting in Vietnam in order to demonstrate our resolve and reliability. This argument implicitly recognized that the fate of Vietnam was, by itself, peripheral to the national security of the United States; it shifted the ground of discussion from the geopolitics of the map to the geopolitics of the soul. Yes, their will to rid their country of foreigners was stronger than our will to demonstrate our will; but by any reasonable standard, our resolve was strong. We did far, far more than enough to meet our treaty obligations, demonstrate our will, and prove our reliability. We financed a quarter of a century of war in Vietnam. We fought there in strength for ten years—longer than we fought in World War I, in World War II, or in Korea, longer than in all of them put together. Fifty-eight thousand American soldiers were killed. We said we would fight, therefore we must fight: at many a juncture along the way that logic seemed compelling. But it was not a compelling reason to fight forever. Our guarantees were not worthless. It was the war that was worthless.



U.S. SOLDIER CARRYING WOUNDED BABY, HUÉ, 1968
PHOTO BY DON MCCULLIN/MAGNUM

The importance of the collapse of the domino theory to the debate over the war's morality is that the theory, if correct, could arguably have justified an enormous degree of suffering and death. What if it had really been true that the loss of Vietnam would doom Australia, India, Hawaii, and the rest to war followed by Communist totalitarianism? A firm moral case can be made that preventing the certain devastation and enslavement of many countries can justify the destruction, even the total destruction, of one. "We had to destroy this village in order to save a hundred villages" is a defensible proposition. But "we had to destroy this village in order to save it" is a moral absurdity. When the domino theory fell, so, domino-like, did one of the moral props of the war.

We are left, then, with the "moral case," as Podhoretz calls it—the view that the war was moral because it was an attempt to save South Vietnam from Communism. My tutor friend, back in his SDS days, did not think this a moral aim, would not have thought it a moral aim even if it could have been achieved without cost. In thinking these things he made a moral error, and he is right to rue it. Even those of us who took the view that it did not make much difference to the South Vietnamese whether they lived under Communism or under the Saigon regime made a moral error. Take away the war and the Saigon regime, with all its noisy corruption and repressiveness, was morally preferable to the totalitarian silence that now rules, with scarcely less corruption, in Ho Chi Minh City. Except that you can't take away the war.

The overwhelming majority of those who opposed the war did not in any case reject the aim of saving South Vietnam from Communism. And to the extent that the war was fought for this aim it was fought for a moral aim. But this says no more than that the war was fought with good intentions rather than evil ones, which is saying very little. If good intentions were enough, there would be no neoconservatives.

In war the moral question is always the same: does the end justify the means? The calculations are necessarily ugly, but they are unavoidable. Ten years ago the choice was not between a Communist South Vietnam and a non-Communist one. It was between a Communist South Vietnam on the one hand, and the terrible cost of keeping South Vietnam non-Communist on the other. The aftermath of the war—the boat people, the "reeducation" camps, above all the unimaginable horror that engulfed Cambodia—has made the "moral case," the argument that the war was worth fighting solely for the sake of the people of Indochina, seem much more plausible than it did at the time. But for the "moral case" to be clinched, the war must be judged to have been winnable—winnable, moreover, at a lower cost in suffering and death than the cost of the Communist victory.

The retrospective defenders of the war must argue that the war could have been won, and their arguments mostly take the form of "if only." If only the bombers had hit "worthwhile targets" on their 1,000 sorties a day, says the military analyst Edward Luttwak in a current *Harper's* symposium, it "would have ended the war in a day." If only Lyndon Johnson had rallied the country behind the war as a moral imperative, writes Podhoretz in his Vietnam book, then the American people would have remained steadfast. If only the United States had followed a purposeful military strategy, argues Harry G. Summers in *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, then the conditions for a successful South Vietnamese war against the Vietcong might have been created. If only Congress

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hadn't voted down supplementary military aid to the Saigon government in 1975, contends Richard Nixon in his new book, *No More Vietnams*, then everything might have turned out fine.

All of these arguments rest on the assumption that there was a point at which North Vietnam, having calculated that the actual costs of war were exceeding the prospective benefits of victory, would have stopped fighting. It seems clearer than ever today that there was no such point. Some people understood this at the time. Ten years ago, this magazine published a special issue devoted to the end of the war. Richard Holbrooke, who had resigned in protest from the foreign service, and who later became an assistant secretary of state, began his essay with these words:

> For at least eight years it seemed reasonable to me to assume that sooner or later, no matter what we did in Vietnam, things would end badly for us. This feeling was not based on any desire to see us humiliated, or any feeling that the other side represented the forces of goodness and light; it just seemed that the only way to stave off an eventual Communist victory was with an open-ended, and therefore endless, application of American firepower in support of the South Vietnamese regime. No matter how much force we were willing to use, this would not end the war, only prevent Saigon's defeat. And the human suffering would be bottomless. The war would go on until the North Vietnamese achieved their objectives.

Holbrooke's judgment has stood up well. "The essential reality of the struggle," wrote Stanley Karnow in *Vietnam: A History*, published in 1983, "was that the Communists, imbued with an almost fanatical sense of dedication to a reunified Vietnam under their control, saw the war against the United States and its South Vietnamese ally as the continuation of two thousand years of resistance to Chinese and later French rule. They were prepared to accept limitless casualties to attain their sacred objective. Ho Chi Minh, their leader, had made that calculation plain to the French as they braced for war in the late 1940s. 'You can kill ten of my men for every one I kill of yours,' he warned them, 'but even at those odds, you will lose and I will win.' " William Broyles Jr., who fought in Vietnam 15 years ago as a Marine officer, and who recently went back for a visit during which he talked to hundreds of his former enemies, has a similar assessment. Writing in the April *Atlantic*, he concludes, "Whatever the price of winning the war—twenty more years of fighting, another million dead, the destruction of Hanoi—the North Vietnamese were willing to pay it."

IF THE North Vietnamese were willing to accept limitless casualties, if they were willing to pay any price, then the war could not have been won except by the physical destruction of North Vietnam and the killing of a large proportion of its people. A million? Three million? Six million? The shrill accusation of some in the antiwar movement that the war was "genocidal" was not entirely without justice. Of course no American wanted to kill everybody in North Vietnam. Americans are not monsters. But Americans are not losers, either. Americans are winners. But the logic of winning in Vietnam was inescapably the logic of genocide. We did not lose in Vietnam. We chose not to win. If our entry into the war had something to do with preserving our values, so did our exit from it.

Even Podhoretz, in his book on Vietnam, admits repeatedly that the war could not have been won. In the end, he writes, "The United States demonstrated that saving South Vietnam from Communism was not only beyond its reasonable military, political, and intellectual capabilities but that it was ultimately beyond its moral capabilities as well." Yes, it was beyond our moral capabilities—except that what he understands as a moral failure I understand as a moral success. It wasn't cowardice that finally impelled us to quit. It was conscience.

THE OLD ARGUMENTS for the war still walk among us, zombielike, in the form of the theory of the Vietnam syndrome, a term calculated to make the American people's desire to avoid another Vietnam sound pathological rather than prudent. Of course, if the war did result in a syndrome, if it did result in a paralysis of American will and so forth, that is hardly an argument that the war was a good idea. Nor do the follies of parts of the antiwar movement somehow vindicate the war. On the contrary, the antiwar movement was created by the war. Is it really so surprising that this unending, unwinnable war became a machine for producing irrationality, hysteria, and rage? The conservatives' anger at the antiwar movement is misplaced.

The actual consequences of this so-called syndrome are highly problematic. We "lost" Iran after Vietnam, but we "lost" Cuba before it. A more precise effect of the war upon the American political psyche was diagnosed in 1971 by Nathan Glazer, who wrote in a famous *Commentary* article titled "Vietnam: The Case for Immediate Withdrawal" that "the experience of Vietnam has turned the American people into haters of war." That seems exactly right. By August 1964, 300 Americans had been killed and 1,000 wounded in Vietnam. Yet there were only a half-dozen American correspondents reporting on the war. (Meanwhile President Johnson was running as the peace candidate, with the support of SDS.) Such relative public indifference to a war with American deaths running into the hundreds would be unthinkable today. It took years for any significant movement of protest to develop against the Vietnam War. The premises of U.S. involvement were scarcely questioned for the first 15 years. But if the Reagan administration launches an invasion of Nicaragua today, thousands of church people are ready to commit civil disobedience tomorrow. And before giving its support to the new war, the public would insist on a full and prompt discussion of its aims, purposes, and prospects—not out of cynicism or morbid suspicion, but out of a healthy, skeptical, democratic spirit of self-government. War can sometimes be a necessity, but is always to be abhorred. Yes, we were right to oppose the Vietnam War, all of us. Even my friend the Reagan-voting ex-SDSer. Even Norman Podhoretz. □

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What the French learned at Dien Bien Phu.

THE EMPIRE'S NEW CLOTHES

BY HENRY FAIRLIE

BEFORE THE Americans were defeated, the French were defeated. Before the Americans got out, the French got out. Before the fall of Saigon, there was the fall of Dien Bien Phu. The two events were separated, almost to the day, by 21 years. This is perhaps the most distressing fact of all, for what in those two decades did the power or diplomacy of the West accomplish? What light does the defeat of a European colonial empire in 1954 throw on the defeat of American world power in 1975?

The names from the French catastrophe return to the memory as if from another and far-distant world. There was General Eugene-Henri Navarre—a kingdom for a name—commander of the French forces in Indochina, who on January 1, 1954, predicted victory within six months, as the American commanders were later to do. There was Colonel Christian de Castries, the French commander at Dien Bien Phu, who ordered his artillery to fire on his own headquarters if the Vietminh overran the fortress. There was even Lieutenant Geneviève de Galard-Terraube, the one woman in Dien Bien Phu, a nurse who refused to leave after it fell until all the wounded had been evacuated. Oh, the glory of France, its martial tradition, the colors of its armies—shredded by whom? By these "little brown rebels," as they were called at the time.

Americans who have the memory only of the prolonged agony of their war in Vietnam have no picture of this fierce eight-week siege of a fortress. The war against the Vietminh had already lasted six years when the French occupied Dien Bien Phu by a parachute drop in November 1953. There was much to be said for this move. It prevented a Vietminh thrust into Laos. The base could be used to supply loyal Vietnamese forces in the area. The terrain appeared to give an immense advantage to the superior weapons of the French; they could disentangle themselves from the inconclusiveness of guerrilla warfare. The fortress could be supplied only by air, but no one doubted that this feat was possible. Dien Bien Phu would not fall.

But within four months, by March 1954, the fortress was encircled by about 50,000 Vietminh troops. Inside the base were 13,000 of the toughest troops of the French Union: Moroccans, Foreign Legionnaires (mostly Germans), both with superb French officers and French and Vietnamese paratroops. (One thinks even more wonderingly of Lt. Geneviève among them.) The French paratroops—the paras—were an elite. The paras were tough. The paras were merciless. The paras died with their boots on. The paras would never surrender. But they did.

The Vietminh launched their offensive on March 13. All the eyes of the free world (even in America) were turned to Dien Bien Phu. The rebels at once crippled the French lifeline—the landing strips—but that did not seem to herald a disaster: the garrison could be supplied and reinforced by parachute drops. But day by day it became clearer that something was going wrong. The "little brown rebels" were rewriting the script. No matter how heavily they were bombed and pounded by artillery, they kept creeping forward, a "human sea" (the phrase was on everyone's tongue then). By March 30 they had a footing inside the French defenses. How were the "little bastards" doing it? They had built a vast network of trenches, even under the heavy bombardment, and slowly pushed it forward. That definitely was not cricket—but then the French, unlike the British, had not taught their natives cricket. Natives? Yes, in 1954, natives.

By April 4 they were within a mile of the center of Dien Bien Phu. At this moment of danger and challenge, John Foster Dulles and Anthony Eden came to the help of their French ally: they staunchly proposed a new paper alliance. This was to be the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (Seato), a worthless imitation of NATO. I was in the House of Commons when this was announced by Anthony Eden. Was ever a minister so bold—we would sign a scrap of paper. That must have cheered up Christian de Castries and his beleaguered men. He must also have been cheered up, I suppose, when the French government promoted him to be a brigadier general, and tried to drop his two new gold stars into Dien Bien Phu by parachute. *Hélas*, they fell into the Vietminh lines.

In April the French announced their casualties in the war up to January 1, 1954: a total of 157,792, of whom 57,586 were dead or missing. Vice President Richard Nixon said America should send its own troops. John Foster Dulles said, "No!" President Dwight D. Eisenhower had already said in February that he was "bitterly opposed" to the involvement of United States forces in Indochina. It would be "a great tragedy" for America. Charles Wilson, the secretary of defense, rejected the idea of dropping the atomic bomb to save the French, "so let's stop rattling that atomic bomb." There would be no aid "at any level higher than now." That aid, short of troops, was substantial. America was bearing 78 percent of the cost of the war.

Our eyes turned back to Dien Bien Phu. On April 15 the

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Vietminh struck from the north and occupied the upper end of the main (northern) airstrip. The fighting was now hand to hand with bayonets. By April 27 the defenses had shrunk to a diameter of less than a mile. Still the Foreign Legionnaires were parachuted in daily. The defenses went on shrinking. On May 7 the fortress fell after a 20-hour battle that had begun by moonlight. Some 10,000 French troops surrendered. The inconceivable had happened.

Although colonial wars were to continue—notably in Algeria—the European empires had fought their last pitched battle in defense of their colonies. The result of the fall of Dien Bien Phu was the French evacuation of Indochina and the partition of the country into North Vietnam and South Vietnam. Twenty-one years later the result of the fall of Saigon was the American evacuation of Vietnam and the reunion of the two parts under the Vietminh. How can one tell the story without a grimace?

INJURED FRENCH TROOPS DURING THE BATTLE OF DIEN BIEN PHU
PHOTO BY DANIEL CAMUS/MAGNUM

The nerveless Eden was the main engineer of the truce and partition at Geneva, and his head was wreathed in laurels for his achievement. But the reality was that Britain and America were acquiescing in the French defeat, and forcing the French to surrender and accept terms that were wholly to the advantage of the Vietminh. Eden had his reward two years later when he joined France and Israel in the operation at Suez, which, if pursued with resolution, could have been carried through with dispatch and very little expenditure of lives and treasure. But Eisenhower undermined the three allies, virtually in collusion with the Soviet Union, and as a result of that act of irreparable folly the United States has found itself ever since with a solitary, dangerous, and costly role in the Middle East.

What we were witnessing at Dien Bien Phu and Suez were the last efforts of the old empires to exert their strength as independent world powers. But what Dien Bien Phu and Suez proved was that power had finally passed from them to the United States. For centuries the European empires had shared among themselves the responsibility for preserving the world order. Suez marked the unequivocal assertion by the United States that it would assume that responsibility alone. If it was alone in Saigon, it was because it had asked to be alone.

The old empires may have fought each other from time to time in different parts of the world, and the war between England and France from 1756 to 1763 was virtually a global war for supremacy on an 18th-century scale, but it would never have occurred to one of them to go round the globe trying to upset the others' empires. The British would have paled at the thought of undertaking the burden of Algeria, Morocco, the Sahara, and they were extremely lucky not to get enmeshed with the French and Belgians in the Congo. But the hostility of FDR to the European empires stunned many Britons and Europeans. They could not believe that America wished to make its own power so solitary.

So what are the conditions in which America, boasting it is not an empire, must exercise that power? Clearly it is less easy for the United States than for the empires to define what it is defending and ought to defend. Outside its own national territory, it has no territories of its own. It is quite useful as a beginning for a nation to be able to say: "That's mine. I'm going to keep it." Everyone understands the claim; that is why the Vietminh were "rebels" to the French. What is more, everyone understands that you will defend your empire, even those who choose to attack it. But the United States can define no one as a rebel outside its own national boundaries. Of what beyond its boundaries can America say, "That's mine"? What can it defend without having to find some moral, political, or intellectual "reason" to defend it? This may all seem very simple. But it is an additional burden to a great power, not only to have to determine all the time where its true interests lie, but to have to demonstrate to the world that in defending them it is also fighting for some universal principle of truth, beauty, and goodness. When a McNamara or a Weinberger arms the nation, he must improbably be represented as a crusader.

If it was extremely difficult by 1954 for France to show

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why it should be in Indochina, it was more than twice as difficult for the United States by 1964 to show why it should be in Vietnam, as it will remain difficult to show why it should be in Central America, or indeed anywhere outside its national boundaries. In the absence of empire and the universal acceptance of empire, the United States has to reargue the legitimacy of its power every time. This is one of its burdens. But those who today defend the exercise of American power do not acknowledge the difficulty. They are extremely casual and shallow in their attempts to justify a form of power that is neither imperial nor tyrannical.

FOR THERE IS another difficulty: the ideas that undermined the legitimacy of the empires in turn make the exercise of American power more difficult. The crucial fact is that the European empires (and the British in particular) carried with them the seeds of their own destruction. The British gave John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* to the very people they were holding subject. The French may have lashed their natives with one hand, but they passed out the literature of "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*" with the other. The empires kept throwing the rebels into jail, and then let in the missionaries, who told the prisoners that they were equal in the sight of God to their governors. The British taught the Indians (and West Indians, and Africans) how to play cricket like English gentlemen, even down to the immaculate white flannels, and then when stumps were drawn at the end of the day, expected the Indians (and the rest) to resume their position as a subject people. Ho Chi Minh sat in on the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, as fully acquainted with Western ideas of liberty, dissent, and revolution as Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson. Where else did he and all the rest who rebelled against the West get their ideas except from the West? And why should America expect that others who now regard their own governments as oppressive and as instruments of American power will not be affected in the same way by the ideas they continue to get from the West—not least from America itself? If you examine closely some of the utterances of Jeane Kirkpatrick, you find that in the end she regards the opponents of American power in the Third World as *rebels* in exactly the same way as did the old empires and the French embattled in Dien Bien Phu.

When the old empires needed a base overseas to secure their possessions, they just seized an island, or a province, sometimes a whole country, and planted their flags there. When General Sir Charles Napier occupied the Sindh against the express orders of the British government, *Punch* created the story that he had announced the conquest with a dispatch to London with the one Latin word "*Peccavi*"—"I have sinned." It would be very convenient if American commanders could do that—say, in Nicaragua—but Dan Rather will be there before the conquest is complete, Congress will fuss, and Anthony Lewis will beat his head against the Wailing Wall.

Therefore if it is in the strategic interest of the United States to have "friendly governments" in Central America, which will usually mean some overt or covert American presence (in other words, the establishment of a base), then some more persuasive rationale of American power must be offered than has so far been elaborated by its defenders. For it is not only Dan Rather and Anthony Lewis who will be there. It is the no longer huddled masses of the world. When I reported from Cyprus, Algeria, and the whole of Africa during the fifties, when the "natives" were erupting against the old empires, there was nothing of which I was more aware than the universal presence of the portable radio. When the transistor radio came it completed this revolution. The most wretched peasants can be found gathered round a radio and listening to myriad voices, with myriad messages, not least the BBC Overseas Service, not least the West's own programs, which unavoidably carry, with the news, the ideas of the Western political tradition.

DEAN ACHESON stung the British in the fifties when he said: "Britain has lost an empire, and has not yet found a role." The words apply equally well to the United States today. America is not an empire, and lives in a world in which it cannot claim to be an empire, but it has not yet defined its role. If those who support the exercise of American power would attend with less glibness to that challenge they might make its exercise more acceptable.

In 1966 Walter Lippmann invited me to lunch at the Metropolitan Club in Washington. I was a defender of the American involvement in Vietnam (until it became clear that America had no intention of letting its forces win the war), and Lippmann and I were arguing about it, as we had done before. He suddenly said to me: "You're dangerous, Fairlie. You come over here with all your Old World ideas and corrupt the adolescents like McNamara and McGeorge Bundy."

My reaction was that the only Old World idea I had brought with me was the notion that a great power must not exercise its power unless it is willing to use adequate force. But insofar as he had a point, it was that the Old World justifications of power can no longer be used. That is the connection between Dien Bien Phu and Saigon. America has solitarily assumed the burdens of empire when neither the times in which we live nor its own political tradition will allow it to use the arguments of empire; and neither its politicians nor its intellectuals have gone nearly deep enough in trying to find alternative arguments for the proper uses of power. For all the ham-handedness with which Jimmy Carter made human rights the focus of the American exercise of power, at least he made a beginning. That has not been explored seriously by his successors, and you cannot use the appeal to human rights if you ask the people of the world to make a devious distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, which has some metaphysical validity, but is politically meretricious.

This is to justify the exercise of your power by hypocrisy, and that is a lance which at the first blow will splinter. It splintered in Saigon. □

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Too little strategy, too much 'intelligence.'

How We Lost

By Harry G. Summers Jr.

"THEORY . . . demands that at the outset of a war its character and scope should be determined on the basis of political probabilities," wrote Carl von Clausewitz a century and a half ago, ". . . and [makes] imperative the need not to take the first step without considering the last." Caught up in new and sophisticated academic theories of limited war in the nuclear age, those who took America to war in Vietnam in the mid-sixties were not even aware of this "ancient" (and therefore by the anti-historical attitudes of the times, irrelevant) practical advice. More surprising, neither were those who encouraged General William C. Westmoreland—the very personification of that war—to go to trial 20 years later. Advertised as a reassessment of the war, the CBS-Westmoreland trial instead became a reiteration of that unfortunate adventure, ending on the same unsatisfactory note. It was, as many noted, the Vietnam War in microcosm.

Like that war, the trial did produce lessons for the future, but again they were obscured by the smoke from the courtroom "battlefield." The ostensible issues—General Westmoreland's honor and CBS's journalism techniques—although crucial to the protagonists, were the least important aspects of the trial. What was important was buried in the testimony: insights on the nature of the war, on the ability of "intelligence" to influence war, and on the character of America's organization-for-combat.

During the trial, General Westmoreland mentioned in passing that his tactics were akin to those of the Civil War. What he meant was that the objective was not the seizure and occupation of territory (as in World War II), but as in the Civil War, the destruction of the enemy's armed forces. Recently James Reston Jr. in his book *Sherman's March and Vietnam* also used the Civil War as a way to explain Vietnam. Although his thesis that Sherman was the precursor of "Vietnam War crimes" is a bit sappy, it is certainly true that one can understand the Vietnam War better through a reading of such classics as Shelby Foote's *The Civil War* than from most of the literature on the war itself.

The trial testimony of the intelligence "experts" is a case in point. They were almost a reincarnation of Allan T. Pinkerton, General George McClellan's intelligence chief in the Army of the Potomac in the early days of the Civil War. Pinkerton took a broad view of enemy strength. As McClellan was closing on Richmond on the eve of the Seven Days battle in 1862, he was convinced by Pinkerton that he was badly outnumbered by General Robert E. Lee's "200,000-man" Army of Northern Virginia. As a result McClellan failed to press home his attack. Lee, who actually had some 90,000 troops under arms, was in fact at a numerical disadvantage. But when one of his generals called this to his attention, Lee said, "Stop! Stop! If you go to ciphering we are whipped beforehand."

The Westmoreland trial made it all too clear that in Vietnam we had "gone to ciphering" from the very beginning. It colored the whole understanding of the war. The "hard numbers" on body count and enemy strength took on an importance far exceeding their actual value. The media seemed impressed by the testimony of "military officers" like Joseph McChristian and Gaines Hawkins. But to frontline infantrymen, these officials were disdainfully known as REMFs, an acronym best translated in the interests of propriety as "rear-echelon-myth-fancifiers." They were the natural successors of Allan Pinkerton.

Their expert testimony, far from clarifying the nature of the war, only distorted it. Just as many people visualize the Civil War as the cornfield at Antietam where both sides lined up in ranks and blazed away at each other, many visualize the Vietnam War as one waged by elusive black-pajama-clad Vietcong guerrillas armed with bamboo stakes and primitive weapons. The truth was that after Antietam in the Civil War one side was almost always entrenched in fortified positions that the other side had to attack. The same was true in Vietnam beginning with the Battle of the Ia Drang in the fall of 1965. North Vietnamese general Vo Nguyen Giap kept trying to refight the Battle of Dien Bien Phu by attacking U.S. fire bases and defensive positions head-on; as a result (by his own admission) some half-million soldiers were *killed* by 1969. Similarly, U.S. infantry units assaulted enemy units well dug in and camouflaged and armed with sophisticated AK-47 automatic rifles and machine guns. They too suffered astoundingly high casualty rates.

But the argument about numbers is largely meaningless. Even if the Order of Battle had included every one of the experts' disputed numbers, it wouldn't have made any difference. As CIA witness George Allen admitted in 1982, it wasn't the numbers that did us in, "it was a fundamental

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question of the soundness of our policy, of our whole approach to the war."

There is a connection between intelligence reporting and "the soundness of policy." During the Civil War, frustrated by the incompetence of his generals in the Army of the Potomac, who were continually spooked by inflated intelligence reports, President Lincoln attempted without success to manage the war directly from Washington. Finally, in desperation, he turned to the one Union general who was not frightened by such arithmetic—General Ulysses S. Grant. According to his most trusted lieutenant, General William Tecumseh Sherman, Grant never worried about an enemy he couldn't see. On March 9, 1864, Lincoln appointed Grant to be general-in-chief. Grant left Washington and took firm control of the field operations of the Army.

After three terrible years of trial and error, the Union had discovered Clausewitz's insight: that war had two complementary dimensions, both of which were critical to battlefield success. The first was what Clausewitz called "preparation for war [what today we would call the administration and logistics of war] . . . the creation, training and maintenance of the fighting force." The second was what he called "the conduct of war proper [what we would label military battlefield operations] . . . the uses of these means, once they have been developed, for the purposes of the war . . . [for] fighting itself."

These two dimensions, which together make up the whole of war, rest on entirely different philosophical foundations. Administration and logistics depend on fixed values, physical qualities, and unilateral actions. They can be programmed, quantified, and (today) computerized. Military operations rest on uncertainty, variable qualities, psychological forces, and the continuous interaction of opposites. Here intangibles are paramount, because in its essence "war is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will," and it is on this will that everything on the battlefield ultimately depends. With Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to manage the administration and logistics and General Grant to direct military operations in the field, President Lincoln soon won the Civil War.

This same organization was repeated in World War I, 50 years later. Under the overall control of President Wilson, Secretary of War Newton Baker supervised procurement, administration, and logistics; General Tasker Bliss and later Peyton March took charge of overseeing military operations. Again in World War II, under President Franklin Roosevelt's watchful eye, Secretary of War Henry Stimson managed procurement and supply and General George Marshall ran the operational side of the war. In fact, Roosevelt told Secretary Stimson that he wanted "to make it very clear that the Commander-in-Chief exercises his command function in relation to strategy, tactics, and operations directly through the Army Chief of Staff."

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But, as General Bruce Palmer Jr. recently pointed out in *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam*, all of this changed after World War II, when a secretary of defense was interposed between the president and his military advisers. The change was not apparent in the Korean War, both because the secretary of defense was former Army chief of staff George Marshall and because the Army was named "executive agent" to oversee the war in Korea (a system abolished soon after the war was over).

But the structural framework for disaster had been laid. When President John F. Kennedy appointed Robert McNamara as secretary of defense, America had one of the most capable executives in its history in charge of "preparation for war." With his experience as one of the Army Air Force's "whiz kids" in World War II and as president of Ford Motors, his grasp of statistical analysis and modern management techniques was unparalleled. But McNamara not only filled the traditional role of the secretary of war charged with "preparation for war." He was also America's "general-in-chief" charged with the "conduct of war proper." His educated incapacity for that latter role

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was not immediately apparent. His initial task at hand was not fighting a war but getting control of the defense budget, and by extension getting control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Determined to put its own stamp on the government and sweep away the old fogies and stodgy ideas of the Eisenhower years, the Kennedy administration prided itself on new and innovative thinking.

FOR THE ARMY the name of the game soon became the social-science-derived dictates of counterinsurgency. Old-fashioned notions that the purpose of the Army was to defeat the enemy on the battlefield so as to break his will to resist were swept aside. General Maxwell D. Taylor, President Kennedy's special military adviser and for a time chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would later tell the Senate that the United States was not trying to "defeat" the North Vietnamese, only "to cause them to mend their ways." He scoffed at the concept of defeating the enemy as being like "Appomattox or something of that sort."

Those who resisted, such as Army chief of staff General George Decker, a World War II combat veteran, were eased out of office. The new Army chief of staff, General Earle Wheeler, was a team player who had built his reputation as an administrator and manager and who was untainted by battlefield experience in either World War II or Korea. By July 1964, a month before the Gulf of Tonkin incident that took America to war, General Wheeler had become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Washington-level organization for the conduct of the Vietnam War was in place.

By law the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not in the chain of command. The Army chief of staff, who in both world wars had been the president's principal military operational adviser, saw President Johnson privately only two times between June 1965 and June 1966. Instead of turning to the military professionals, McNamara's civilian aides, as Stanley Karnow relates in *Vietnam: A History*, "canvassed several prominent scholars . . . who in turn assembled forty-seven of their academic colleagues . . . for deliberations throughout the summer of 1966 [and their study] confirmed McNamara's . . . reservations about the direction of U.S. policy in Vietnam."

With their authority eroded and cut out of both the planning and the direction of the war, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (in what in retrospect seems almost a fit of pique) abdicated their responsibilities and abandoned the war to their civilian overseers. When Clark Clifford became secretary of defense in March 1968, he questioned the Joint Chiefs of Staff and found to his amazement that "we had no military plan to win the war." But his surprise was misplaced. It was his own office—the Office of the Secretary of Defense—not the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had arrogated the authority for such plans and concepts. That they did not exist shows the degree to which operational concerns had been lost in the quantified, computerized world of the McNamara Pentagon.

Even more telling is the comparison between the United States organization-for-combat and that of our enemy. General Westmoreland is still seen by many as the American counterpart of North Vietnamese general Vo Nguyen Giap. Nothing could be further from the mark. If Westmoreland had such a counterpart it was Lieutenant General Tran Van Tra, the North Vietnamese army field commander. General Giap's true counterpart was McNamara. Both men were ministers of defense; both sat on the highest political council, Giap on the Politburo, McNamara on the National Security Council. Both were "generals-in-chief" of their country's armed forces. But there was one important difference between them: the will to win the war.

General Giap told the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci in 1969 that even though he had already lost more than half a million killed on the battlefield, he would continue to fight "as long as necessary—ten, fifteen, twenty, fifty years." McNamara testified at the CBS-Westmoreland trial that "I reached the conclusion the war could not be won militarily no later than '66 . . . [and] may have reached it as early as the latter part of '65."

This is an appalling admission. America's "general-in-chief" had lost the will to win in 1965, when the war had only begun. Congress, by law, has said that a soldier who loses his nerve on the battlefield "shall suffer death, or such other punishment as a court martial may direct." It has said nothing, however, over what should be done about a feckless leader who would order those soldiers into battle even though convinced beforehand that they could not win.

Perhaps one reason there is no such law is that such a loss of will was unprecedented in American military history. Only one example even comes close—General George McClellan, unnerved by Pinkerton's statistics, whose heart was never in the prosecution of the Civil War, and who in 1864 in the midst of that war ran on the Democratic Party platform calling for an immediate end to hostilities. Fortunately for the Republic, Lincoln had the good sense to remove McClellan as "general-in-chief" early in the war, not keep him in office until the war was lost.

THE CBS-WESTMORELAND trial could have brought us full circle. As we have seen, the examples of McClellan and his successors led America to an efficient organization-for-combat that provided for civilian direction and control by the president and for the complementary military tasks of administration and logistics by the secretary of war and operational battlefield command by the Army general-in-chief (later chief of staff). This organization led us to victory in two world wars, only to be discarded in 1947 in favor of a return to the disjointed system that caused Lincoln so much grief in the early days of the Civil War. These structural defects can be bridged by the force of personalities, as they were during the Korean War and as (from all accounts) they are today with the harmonious, if largely untested, working relationships among President Reagan, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, and General John Vessey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

But as the CBS-Westmoreland trial again reminds us,

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the Vietnam War demonstrates that we cannot count on such a fortuitous conjunction of personalities to overcome these basic structural flaws. When America's "general-in-chief" is a political appointee, it should not surprise us that there is pressure for his subordinate military commanders to become politicized as well. One of America's most distinguished military strategists, General Matthew B. Ridgway, warned in 1956 that "under no circumstances, regardless of pressures from whatever source or motive, should the professional military man yield, or compromise his judgment for other than convincing military reasons. To do otherwise would destroy his usefulness." When it was revealed in the trial that enemy strength figures were manipulated not for "convincing military reasons" (even though a good case could have been made for opposing the higher figures on those grounds alone), but for purely political purposes, General Westmoreland's case fell apart.

Nevertheless, CBS can take little comfort in that fact. The trial also revealed the shallowness of television's "investigative journalism." Instead of using the "first step" of the politicization of enemy battlefield statistics as a way to probe the potentially fatal flaws in the Pentagon command structure, CBS frittered away its time and its credibility on sensational charges of "conspiracy." The CBS-Westmoreland trial thus made it even more difficult for us to learn where America's organization-for-combat failed us in Vietnam.

Former revolutionaries turn against the regime.

VIETNAM'S OPPOSITION TODAY

BY DOAN VAN TOAI AND DAVID CHANOFF

HO CHI MINH died in 1969, six years before his revolution achieved its final triumph. When it did, the victory celebration in Saigon (soon to be renamed Ho Chi Minh City) was dedicated to his memory. "Ho's spirit," according to one leading participant, "seemed almost palpable in the air around the reviewing stand." Politburo member Pham Hung, speaking for the party, declared, "All Vietnamese are the victors. Everyone with Vietnamese blood should take pride in the common victory of the whole nation. Only the American imperialists are the losers." It was a statement weighted with magnanimity toward the half-million Saigon citizens gathered in front of the presidential palace—many of whom only a few days before had been enemies or neutral skeptics.

But a decade after Saigon's fall it is evident that a good many Vietnamese were also the losers. What's surprising is that those whose hopes were destroyed in the revolution's aftermath included so many of the revolutionaries themselves. As unified Vietnam faces its second decade, it is experiencing inner-party conflict and a turning point in its foreign and domestic policies. For China, Asean, and the U.S. the denouement of Vietnam's internal struggle is likely to mean peace or war in Southeast Asia.

Hanoi's domestic crisis has been exacerbated by growing opposition to the postwar leadership of Politburo strongmen Le Duan (Ho Chi Minh's successor) and Le Duc Tho (Henry Kissinger's Paris adversary). In particular, their Stalinist approach to running the country and their policy of close alliance with the Soviet Union have angered many old comrades in arms, who are now charging them with having betrayed the revolution.

Opposition to Le Duan and Le Duc Tho has coalesced around three distinct groups, each of which has its own grievance. The first of these groups (and the least powerful) is a loose agglomeration of former Vietcong leaders and religious and intellectual dissidents who before 1975 were among the most determined anti-Thieu activists. These individuals represent the more liberal and humane side of Vietnam's revolution. In their heyday they excited vast sympathy in the West; today they find themselves for the most part in forced retirement, in exile, or in jail.

By and large these were people who had fought hard to rid Vietnam of what they considered pernicious American influence. Their vision of postwar Vietnam revolved around the official Vietcong policy of "Reconciliation and Concord," a program to heal the civil war's legacy of hatred and marshal resources for national recovery. Truong Nhu Tang, the Vietcong minister of justice who was one of the policy's architects, summed it up this way: "It was our deepest conviction that the cause of liberation warranted any sacrifice whatsoever. . . . But at the same

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time these sacrifices constituted for us, for the leadership, the heaviest burden of responsibility. What the nation had lived through over the past 19 years could only be vindicated by what was to come afterward."

For Tang and such wartime colleagues as Minister of Health Dong Quynh Hoa and President Trinh Dinh Thao of the Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces, what came afterward—forced socialization, reeducation camps, the destruction of civil rights—was an outright betrayal. Their feelings are echoed by prominent "third force" leaders—among them Catholic social activists Father Chan Tin and Father Tran Huu Thanh, as well as leading Buddhist spokesmen Thich Tri Quang and Thich Quang Do. Tri Quang, under house arrest now, was the chief strategist of the Buddhist opposition that so effectively discredited various Saigon dictatorships from Diem to Thieu. Buddhist self-immolations then captured the world's attention. Less well known is that after the war Vietnam's Unified Buddhist Church was suppressed and many of its leaders imprisoned. Tri Quang's lieutenant, the venerable Thien Minh, died in the revolution's Ham Tan prison shortly after unification. (He had survived years of jail under Thieu.) Quang Do, another Unified Church leader and a Nobel Peace Prize candidate in 1979, has been in and out of prison since Saigon's fall, and is now in internal exile. These individuals were at the heart of the non-Communist wartime resistance. Though lacking any formal power base now, they and other human rights dissidents retain great prestige among ordinary Vietnamese. For the Hanoi regime they constitute a worrisome core of popular discontent.

MORE IMMEDIATELY dangerous to the Politburo's current leadership is the problem of Southern Vietnamese Communists within the party hierarchy. The rift between Northern and Southern elements of the revolution initially surfaced as long ago as 1970 (the year after Ho Chi Minh's death). During the war this conflict had resulted in the purge of such leading Southern Communists as Tran Buu Kiem, the Vietcong's foreign policy expert, and Tran Bach Dang, party chief for urban organization. It also helped bring about the mass desertion of Southern guerrillas, who swamped American and South Vietnamese facilities from 1970 to 1972. (Eventually more than 250,000 Vietcong gave themselves up.) Many of these veteran fighters never lost their hatred for Thieu and the United States. But by the early seventies they knew that the Northern-run party was in complete control and that even if victory came their own prospects were not good. Tragically, knowledge of this North/South clash remained unknown to all but a few American field intelligence people, and never did make an impact on U.S. planning.

After the war, few Southern leaders were taken into the unified government, and the South was flooded with Northern administrators, political cadres, and army personnel. They quickly achieved the same kind of reputation that Northern carpetbaggers earned in the American South after our own civil war. According to Trinh Duc, former secretary of the Vung Tau Party branch, periodic incursions of Northerners into local Southern administrations were capped by a major purge of Southern cadres in 1982. It was, in his words, "almost like a coup d'état."

It was also in 1982 that Central Committee member Tran Van Tra disappeared, an event that revealed the depth of antagonism between the two regional factions. Tra had been the commander of Vietcong main forces and was responsible (with Northern chief of staff Van Tien Dung) for the "Ho Chi Minh Campaign," which destroyed South Vietnam's army in the spring of 1975. His war memoirs (published in 1982) presented an ardently Southern point of view and an implicit attack on party faithlessness toward the Vietcong guerrillas. The book somehow passed the censors, but was confiscated from bookstores shortly after publication. Tra has not been heard from since.

In reality, the North/South conflict is as much ideological as regional. By and large, party members from the South are a good deal more pragmatic and less "pure" than their Russian-trained Northern counterparts. They are unhappy about the rigid, Soviet-style approach to economic planning that has resulted in industrial and agricultural stagnation, and about the "class struggle" social policies that have imprisoned or ostracized many of the South's most competent administrators and technocrats. And they have not enthusiastically supported the six-year-old war with Cambodia, which continues to sap Vietnam's economy and deflect attention from domestic reconstruction.

If the Southern party members represent an ongoing challenge to the direction Vietnam has taken since unification, an even more fundamental challenge comes from the pro-Chinese faction within the party. One of the most cherished of Ho Chi Minh's policies was neutrality in the conflict between China and the Soviet Union. But after Ho's death, Le Duan and Le Duc Tho were able gradually to tilt the Vietnamese Communist Party toward the Soviets and away from the Chinese, a process that was finally confirmed in the USSR/Vietnam Friendship Treaty of 1978 and the subsequent border war with China. But though the party's pro-Chinese have been outmaneuvered, they have not been eliminated. Indeed, they represent a basic, historical trend in Vietnamese foreign policy that can never be more than temporarily suppressed.

AS A SMALL nation condemned to live out its destiny on China's border, Vietnam's age-old problem has been how to deal with its giant neighbor. Historically the Vietnamese have oscillated between two approaches: accommodation and antagonism. Typically, military resistance against Chinese encroachment has been followed by long periods of diplomatic accommodation. The great 13th-century Vietnamese hero Tran Hung Dao, for example, decisively smashed an invasion from Mongol-ruled China, only to decide a year later that wisdom decreed acknowledging Chinese suzerainty.

Today Le Duan and Le Duc Tho have chosen a policy of opposition to China. They have forged a comprehensive

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military and economic alliance with the Soviets, using Moscow as a counterweight to Beijing. But they have been able to do this only by shattering the unity of the Vietnamese Communist Party. (One of Ho's best-known slogans was "Guarding Party Unity Is Like Guarding the Irises of One's Eyes.") At the Fifth Party Congress they forced through a purge of over 300,000 members who were deemed insufficiently loyal, and almost one-third of the Politburo itself was dismissed. (Among the Politburo casualties were long-term Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh and Minister of Defense Vo Nguyen Giap. Giap, the victor of Dien Bien Phu and Hanoi's chief military strategist in the anti-American war, now heads the State Commission on Birth Control and Family Planning.)

With internal opposition temporarily dispersed, Le Duan and Le Duc Tho have pursued the opposition-to-China policy with a vengeance. The most visible results have been Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and Laos and the establishment of major Soviet bases at Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang. Military dominance over Cambodia and Laos (Duan and Tho believe) is necessary to preclude Chinese pressure through these countries on Vietnam's long and exposed western flank. The Soviet bases, home to medium-range bombers, advanced MIGs, and a nuclear submarine fleet, pose a direct threat to China—as well as to the South China Sea trade and communications routes that are vital to the Southeast Asian nations, Japan, and the United States.

But the Soviet marriage has run into grave difficulties. After six years it has left Vietnam as poverty-ridden as ever and saddled with an imperial war that it cannot sustain alone. It has opened Le Duan's leadership to charges of selling Vietnam into economic and military bondage to the USSR in return for continued privation at home and endless bloodshed in Cambodia.

With the Soviet alliance stumbling toward bankruptcy, pro-Chinese sentiment becomes an ever greater threat to Le Duan and Le Duc Tho. In truth, accommodation with China would bring benefits extremely attractive to many in Vietnam. First, an understanding with the Chinese would enable Vietnam to pull back from its military commitments in Cambodia. This in turn would open the way to normalization with Asean and the West—and to the aid and credits that would accompany normalization. Equally important, accommodation with Beijing would provide the impetus for Vietnam to emulate China's highly successful economic reforms.

These are powerful considerations that give the pro-Chinese faction increasing strength. Most interesting, they are compatible with the human rights concerns of the dissidents and the economic pragmatism of the Southern party elements. For Le Duan and Le Duc Tho, the prospect of a broad-based challenge to their leadership looms in the not too distant future.

THE CONTINUED failure of Vietnam's postwar policies will eventually bring a new leadership and a move away from the Soviet Union. In particular, the present rulers cannot long endure the debilitating stalemate in Cambodia. On the other hand, a solid victory in Cambodia could well give Le Duan and Le Duc Tho the credibility they need to sustain themselves. A workable Indochina hegemony, fulfilling the oldest and grandest visions of the Vietnamese Communist Party (formerly known as the Indochinese Communist Party), would go a long way toward silencing domestic critics and moving the rest of the world to recognize Vietnam as a legitimate regional power.

These are the stakes involved in this year's massive dry-season offensive in Cambodia. It has been, in effect, a last-ditch effort by Vietnam's leaders to make their policies work. Should they succeed, there will be increasing tension and very likely a series of border wars that could flare into something larger. With Cambodia's anti-Vietnam refugees pushed across the Thai frontier, Thailand will become the region's most probable flash point. Faced with the strategic nightmare of a militant and consolidated Indochina ruled from Hanoi, China may lash out, as it did in 1979.

ALREADY Vietnam's government is preparing its people for the possibility of a two-front conflict—with China and Thailand as the counterrevolutionary enemies. Last December a massive show trial was held in which 21 Vietnamese were charged with organizing armed opposition to the regime. (Five were condemned to death.) Street displays of captured weapons were mounted, and government spokesmen announced that 2,000 others would face similar charges. The spies and subversives, according to Vietnamese papers and radio broadcasts, had been sponsored by the Chinese and Thai governments. Thailand, said Vietnam's party daily, "must bear full responsibility for all the serious consequences of her wicked acts as well as of her hostile policy toward Vietnam and the other Indochinese countries." As for China, "The thing that counts for Beijing is how to bleed Vietnam and weaken it for annexation."

The outcome of the war in Cambodia today will determine Vietnam's future foreign policy. This spring's battles will either quicken the domestic crisis confronting Le Duan and Le Duc Tho or reconfirm these two aged warriors in their ascendancy over Vietnamese affairs. One way or the other, the consequences are likely to determine whether Southeast Asia will have peace or war.

What's clear from all this is that since America's departure, events in Indochina have progressed according to a dynamic of their own. It is odd to find ourselves, ten years later, sharing the loser's circle with a good number of Vietnam's revolutionaries. Odder still to think that their goals—an independent Vietnam; the amelioration of economic and civil repression within Vietnam; the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia and Laos—are also our goals. One cannot help but wonder if we might have found a common ground with such people before our mutual bloodletting ever came to pass. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Torn Lives

The opening shot of *My First Wife*, before and under the credits, is typical of the film: it's a cliché that becomes fresh and urgent. A train speeds toward us at night, then past us, and as the lighted windows whiz by, the credits are superimposed. Not exactly novel. Then the very intensity of the shot makes the streaming light seem impatient, trying to brush the words aside to get on with the story. Later, we see that the passing of trains and ships is a recurrent motif. But what is typical of this opening shot is its daring: throughout the work, the director has not been afraid to use the familiar, knowing that why he has to use it and what he means to do with it will make it vital.

My First Wife
(Spectrafilm)

The result is a triumph. The Australian director, Paul Cox, born 1940, has been making films for 20 years. I've seen two earlier ones, *Lonely Hearts* and *Man of Flowers*, both of which dealt with eccentric middle-aged bachelors. Both were deft and mildly serious but were somewhat self-conscious "little" films. Here, collaborating on his screenplay with Bob Ellis, Cox has faced a subject that is both hugely common and huge, the breakup of a marriage. With two extraordinarily fine actors, John Hargreaves, whom I've seen in small roles, and Wendy Hughes, whom I've seen in several prominent ones, Cox strikes deep into agony, bitter paradox, near intoxication through suffering, and thus strikes deep into the hazards of love.

After that opening shot, we hear the chorus of Furies in Gluck's *Orfeo*, and on those voices, we glide into the home of a musician. It's in a suburb of Melbourne. We see Wendy Hughes in the bedroom making love, and we soon learn that the man is not her husband. The husband is John Hargreaves, a composer who makes his living by teaching and by doing radio shows about music. He is in fact broadcasting the *Orfeo* excerpt that is heard in his home while his wife is busy in bed.

The composer is fiercely in love with his wife, mad about their small daughter, passionate about his work. The wife is constrained and soon tells him what she has been holding back chiefly out of consideration, wry though that thought may be: the news that she no longer loves him and wants to move out, with their daughter. The situation is even more painful, an equally wry thought, because her decision has nothing to do with her afternoon friend; she doesn't love that man, he is merely her lover. The simple, grim fact is that one partner in a marriage no longer wants to be in the marriage. It is a caprice of fate, but no more capricious than falling in love was at the outset. It is cruel to the other person but no crueler than it would be to the changed partner to remain.

This film, despite publicity statements to the contrary, is not about new independence in women. Unhappy wives have been fairly free to leave ever since Nora slammed the door; in this century, surely, it's been as common for the wife to leave as for the husband. Further, the break can occur as suddenly—so far as our conscious minds can warn us—in one partner as in the other. For all of Hargreaves's shock and anguish, he has no way of being positive that the same change would never have occurred in him.

The pressing irony is that Hargreaves plunges into terrible hell, even attempts suicide, while Hughes, far from callous, can and will do nothing about it. More, in obligation to her own being, she must do nothing about it. Indeed, she almost comes to resent his suffering as if he were accusing her of malevolence.

Running through their story is the simultaneous account of the dying and death of Hargreaves's father, a Russian emigré whom the son loves very much. Although the weak old man doesn't know about his son's marital troubles, one day when Hargreaves visits the hospital the father tells him that years ago his wife, Hargreaves's mother, fell in love with another man, but that the marriage was maintained, if differently. (In the last sequence at the graveside, the widow's complete emotional breakdown, her utter ravaging by loss, is a comment on the varieties of love. We know that she had once wanted to leave her husband, that she had never stopped loving the other man.) Possibly as a result of this story, Hargreaves and Hughes attempt a reconciliation, but in their marriage bed, a quarrel erupts again, and they split again.

Hargreaves, a sort of younger Trevor Howard, exudes power and humiliating impotence, fire, and helplessness. If one factor in this film is to be praised above others, which is probably a mistake, it's his performance, scalding and pitiful. Besides having played in films and much television, he has had wide experience in the Australian theater, including plays of Shakespeare and Wilde and Brecht and Williams. (He did *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* with Hughes.) His work in *My First Wife* puts him quite certainly in the front rank of contemporary film actors.

Hughes is beautiful, with the cres-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Camila. Argentina, 1847. The passions of a highborn maiden and a young priest, based on fact. Old-style steaminess, made appealing by the actors. (Reviewed 4/22/85)

1984. Richard Burton (O'Brien) and John Hurt (Winston Smith) are first-class in the narrative core of Orwell's novel. Design and direction are chillingly good. (2/4/85)

The Purple Rose of Cairo. Another splendid Woody Allen idea shortchanged by Woody Allen. The plot—a woman and a film actor she fantasizes down off the screen—leads us on, then just quits. (4/1/85)

The Sure Thing. Two college freshmen (freshpersons?) squabble across the U.S. until they get together. Froth, but it really bubbles. (4/8/85)

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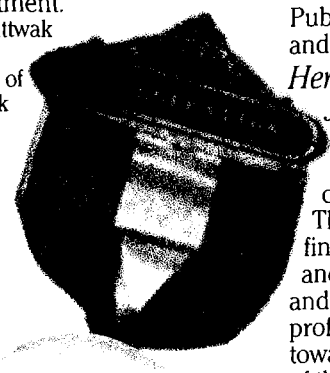

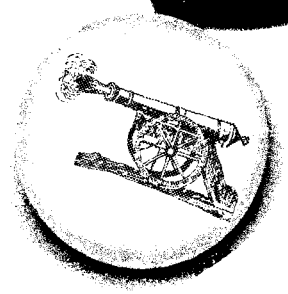

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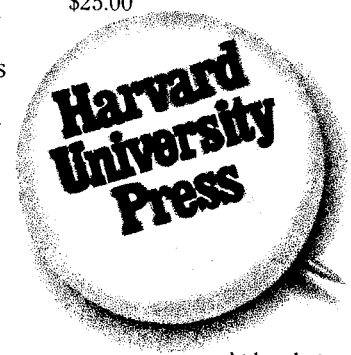

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cent-moon profile found in many lovely women of English stock, and is an actress of range and intelligence. I first became aware of her as the heroine's aunt in *My Brilliant Career*; among other films of hers that I've seen was Cox's *Lonely Hearts*, in which she played a nearly middle-aged, cautious spinster. This was a notable achievement because of her sexuality, which is not only a personal attribute but part of her art. (As it is with Jeanne Moreau, for instance.) She has vivid imagination and the ability to sustain the unspoken. Often in this film, when she and Hargreaves quarrel, she turns away from him impatiently and looks off into space. Cox keeps the frame a two-shot, instead of cutting to Hargreaves alone, because he knows that Hughes can sustain the looking off into space with what is going through her mind.

Cox and Ellis have written with pungency and with just enough cliché to show that there is no more a new way of saying "I don't love you any more" than there is of saying "I love you." The freshness comes from fidelity to character and from the acting. Cox has used memory sequences, as Hargreaves recalls the past at times, shot tellingly with graininess and slow motion. (The footage of the birth of the daughter is said to be footage of Hughes's own delivery of her child a few years ago. This makes Hughes the second woman to use such fact in fiction. The other was Lili Monori in the Hungarian *Nine Months*.) In these sequences and in the whole film, Cox has had sensitive help from his cinematographer, Yuri Sokol, Russian born and Soviet trained, who emigrated to Australia in 1979 and who has worked with Cox on several previous films.

SPECIAL mention must made of the marvelous editing, done by Tim Lewis (under Cox's supervision, I'm sure). The film seems to move swiftly along filaments of feeling, of thought, always just a shade ahead of our expectation, sometimes giving us almost sensory gratification by, for example, cutting from a close scene to a slow pan of a chorus rehearsal. One of the best touches, just because of its position and timing, is a shot of Hughes sitting on a staircase, motionless, worrying about her daughter, who has been kidnapped by Hargreaves. The sense of the film's movement is the sense one gets from a skilled pianist's fingers on the keyboard; that movement makes the music, of course, but is in itself pleasurable.

"Che farò senza Euridice?" Orfeo's plaint is heard near the end. After we think the closure a bit neat, the aptness a bit too apt, we recognize that it is not Cox's choice, it is the husband's own: he is playing the air on a broadcast because it speaks for him. *My First Wife* deals humanely with a terrifying subject. The happiness of human beings, so proud of their faculties, is at the mercy of chance: which person happens to fall in love with another, or doesn't happen to, or stops being in love.

The last shot is in the cemetery, Hargreaves and Hughes walking away from his father's grave, their child walking between them. The end. It seems unsettled, ambiguous. Then we remember the title.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Musical Chairs

Every few years or so around this time, nonprofit theaters begin to shuffle their leadership, which sometimes says more about the state of these institutions than the plays they produce or their annual reports. Roger Stevens—having conjured a poltergeist called the "American National Theater" at the Kennedy Center—recently appointed Peter Sellars to be its medium, luring this young man away from the Boston Shakespeare Company he had led for less than one year. Whatever its impact on the quality of Washington culture or the future of the abandoned Boston company (now in limbo), the move was shrewdly calculated to score powerfully with the media, without whose collective breath no air would lift (or fill) this South Sea Bubble. Now it is rumored that the board of a prominent classical resident theater—uneasy with the defection of subscribers every time its gifted international artistic director stages something out of the ordinary—has been talking about dropping him in favor of a director primarily identified with regional American plays. If this occurs, it would be the kind of raid a colleague once described as destroying two valuable theaters in the hope of salvaging one.

The Cherry Orchard
by Anton Chekhov

In perhaps the most portentous raid now contemplated, the board of the Vivian Beaumont, represented by former mayor John Lindsay, has been negotiating with Gregory Mosher, artistic director of the Goodman Theater, to become the leader of a Lincoln Center house embarrassingly dark for the past six seasons. This is a significant choice for many reasons, not least because it suggests that New York may finally be abandoning its fitful efforts to support a major classical repertory company. In the years following the sole Crinkley season at the Beaumont, another vacuum appeared in the city's shrinking theatrical life—the loss of any major showcase for serious new American plays. Broadway's doors are closed to such risky ventures unless they first demonstrate box office appeal elsewhere; Joseph Papp (who staged American plays his very first season at the Beaumont) has lately been concentrating on works by European dissidents or the British imports now in vogue; Playwrights Horizons seems to favor screwball comedies and witty satires. Where do heavy hitters go when they want to swing for the bleachers?

To the resident theaters, obviously, and particularly to Chicago, where Mosher has established the Goodman's reputation as a center for new American play writing. At the root of this development is Mosher's long-standing friendship with the dramatic laureate of Chicago, David Mamet. But the Goodman is fast becoming a home for disenfranchised playwrights from all over the country. (In approaching Mosher, the Beaumont board undoubtedly noticed that the only significant American plays of the last Broadway season—Mamet's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Glengarry Glen Ross* and David Rabe's *Hurlyburly*—

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originated at the Goodman in appealing productions.) Mosher is not a flashy director in the Meyerhold tradition, but perhaps for that very reason he inspires extraordinary confidence in his writers, whom he lovingly nurtures. This year he decided to make these writers the nucleus of a resident company (called the New Theatre Company) supplemented by a cadre of actors performing at the small second stage of the Goodman while the main stage is occupied with visiting shows from other theaters and large-scale works such as *Huck Finn* and *A Christmas Carol*.

On a recent trip to Chicago, I saw the group's first production, Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, directed by Mosher in a new adaptation by David Mamet. (After this comes a new play by John Guare and an eerie Mamet exploration of psychic swindles called *The Shawl*.) The Chekhov is a risky, perhaps foolhardy, choice with which to launch a new company since it requires ensemble playing of the highest quality and experience, and these actors are just beginning to get to know each other. Nevertheless, it represents a deliberate effort to establish the company's identity swiftly, along with an obvious determination to discover an appropriate American style for modern European classics.

Mosher is a minimalist director who believes a play should be uncluttered by visual metaphors or elaborate designs, and like his production of Mamet's *Edmond* some seasons back, this *Cherry Orchard* is played on a bare stage adorned by only a few sticks of furniture. The most startling thing about it is Mamet's adaptation, which is bound to be a source of considerable controversy. Working from a literal translation by Peter Nelles, Mamet is clearly determined to excise anything unnatural or literary from the play's language, an act of deconstruction designed to exhume the living energies of Chekhov's writing from under the heavy weight of "masterpiece" topsoil. As a result, the dialogue is a series of interrupted sentences, random hesitations, odd emphases, overlapping lines, simultaneous speeches, and above all, a colloquial, almost Chicagoized idiom. Mamet the adapter has turned Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* into a Mamet play.

Since Mamet's ear is famously impeccable, the dialogue is always authentic and convincing. Here is a typical sample, chosen from the first act:

> *Gaev:* What a bore. Ah. Ah . . . I bite my tongue. I beg your *pardon*. *Varya*, speaking of your fiancé. In . . .
>
> *Varya:* . . . Uncle, . . . let's just . . .
>
> *Lyubov:* There's no need to be—we're all glad for you. *Varya*. We are. He's a good *man*, he's . . .

This halting speech with its hints of crudeness and inarticulateness will undoubtedly prove a happy hunting ground for American actors trained in studio methods. But where Mamet might be faulted is in the way he makes everybody sound alike; his adaptation enjoys a unified style at the cost of Chekhov's theme and character intentions. This is, after all, a play about the turnover of classes, and if Ranevskaya stammers as much as Lopakhin or Yasha, then the whole order of semantic differences separating the educated aristocracy from the servant and middle classes begins to break down—which is to introduce prematurely the democratic leveling process that Chekhov (not with total bliss) predicted in the play.

THE ACTING reinforces one's sense that class distinctions are being ignored. Mike Nussbaum (of *Glengarry Glen Ross*) is an excellent Semyonov-Pishchik, an exhausted Jew with drooping eyes and knees that seem to sag to the floor; W. H. Macy plays Trofimov with just the right note of intellectual goofiness; and Lindsay Crouse, perhaps too young and not quite volatile enough for Ranevskaya's mercurial moods, nevertheless proves herself a strong, mature actress with a rich, supported voice. But there is little to distinguish Lyubov's daughter Anya from her adopted sister, Varya, or for that matter from the governess Charlotta or the servant Dunyasha, except slight variations in the timbre of American ingenues. Most disconcerting of all is the Lopakhin of Peter Riegert. Aside from barking his lines at a pitch out of sync with the intimate playing of the other actors in this small house, he transforms this warmhearted vulgarian into a villain out of the mortgage melodramas Chekhov was satirizing, and appears to be motivated in his vengeful behavior (and his inability to connect with Varya) by a secret passion for Ranevskaya.

I am arguing with this production, but I mean this as a tribute to its strong point of view and clear point of departure. If nothing else, it will help to undermine our silly critical notions of "definitive" Chekhov. Mosher's minimalist approach (like Peter Brook's chairless *Cherry Orchard* in Paris) has his characters sitting on the floor, and results in the loss of that ominous harp-string sound, while virtually abandoning any attempt to establish environment, including the cherry orchard outside. Still, he and Mamet have made me rethink the play and that is no small virtue. I'd like to see this company in another *Cherry Orchard* after a few seasons of playing together in a succession of other works.

That opportunity may arise if Mosher agrees to take over the Beaumont, though it is likely that what he would establish there is a playwrights company doing mainly American plays. Most of the discussions thus far have focused on the Mitzi Newhouse Theatre at the Beaumont, an intimate auditorium similar to the Goodman's second stage, and it is reasonable to expect Mosher would charge it with the same policy. He would like to preserve his attachment to the Goodman, perhaps using the second stage as a preparation area for production at the Newhouse, though this is causing some resistance among

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members of the Goodman board; they understandably object to the use for New York tryouts of the theater that Mosher brought to such prominence. What still seems unformulated is a policy for the main stage of the Beaumont. Mosher, who has shown little interest as a director in the Goodman's main stage, does not seem temperamentally equipped to mount the kind of lavish productions demanded by that formal proscenium house, and it may be that some other director will be hired, under Mosher's supervision, to satisfy the theatergoing appetites of a large subscription audience. Another possibility might be for Mosher to import significant classical productions from other resident theaters—as the Arena Stage recently borrowed Lucian Pintilie's brilliant *Tartuffe* from the Guthrie. That would at last give New York the opportunity to see what they've been missing all these years, in residencies short enough to preserve the identity of the visiting companies.

But now a warning. Before settling into darkness under Richmond Crinkley, the troubled Beaumont first took its leadership from Broadway under Kazan and Whitehead, then from such permanent companies as San Francisco's resident Actors Workshop under Herbert Blau and Jules Irving, and then from the adventurous off-Broadway showcases of Joe Papp. In each case, it reached out to success and turned it into failure. Now the Beaumont is reaching toward a Chicago theater with a record of developing new American plays that occasionally end up in the market—attracted, as usual, to the commercial result rather than the artistic process. This approach fills a New York need and it may work. But it is bound to put a new kind of pressure on Mosher unlike anything he experienced in Chicago—a pressure to deliver marketable goods. The career of this valuable man could be at a dangerous turning point. Though not inevitable, it would be tragic if his new position damaged his capacity to work quietly with gifted American writers, if we were again obliged to witness two theaters being destroyed in the hope of saving one.

The Fall of Phnom Penh: A Memoir

THE TEMPLE OF THE BLACK LADY

BY SOMETH MAY

THE Cambodian New Year, which is just coming around, used to be an excuse for three days of celebration. On the first, we would go to the Pagoda to give presents to the monks. Depending on how well we had prospered, we would buy packets of sugar, tea, white candles, incense sticks, and saffron robes. Everything was wrapped in red or yellow cellophane. Leaving the presents in one room, we would go before the altar of the Buddha to burn incense and offer our prayers for the next year. Then we would return to where the presents were, give them to the monks, and have a conversation about religion and daily life. Often I would slip away from this part, and seek out the students who were living at the Pagoda. We would talk as schoolboys talk—making jokes and discussing what we were going to do for the rest of the celebration.

My mother and my sister had been preparing the food a day in advance. Everything was ready for our departure to the countryside, but we never knew exactly when this would be. According to custom the monks at the Pagoda would say prayers after lunch and then go off for their afternoon nap, leaving the lay people chatting together. These conversations were friendly but competitive. The menfolk were trying to show how very well they understood the scriptures. The women would egg their husbands on, or start joshing them and telling them what fools they were. When I was very small I used to be extremely impatient at this stage of the proceedings, but as I grew up a little, say, when I was 12 or 13, I used to wander off from the Pagoda in order to visit the celebrations around Wat Phnom itself.

THE HILL from which Phnom Penh gets its name is a rocky outcrop with a temple on top. The boulevards and parks around Wat Phnom were a favorite spot for the fortune-tellers. At this time of year, young couples would seek out these wise men in order to ask what they should do to get on well together. The fortune-tellers would first ask their dates of birth, then tell them to burn incense sticks and pray silently for what they wanted to know. After a moment's meditation and a consultation of their astrological charts, the wise men would read out the relevant text from the tatty old books in front of them.

The crowds around the hill formed into groups of girls and boys, and they would enjoy singing contests in which insults and compliments were passed from group to group. They made up the songs, using any tune that came to their heads: a girl would sing, "Oh look at him, he's as handsome as a movie star—what a pity his nose is upside down," whereupon a boy from the adjacent group would reply, "She's as pretty as an angel, but her face is as round as the moon" (a tremendous insult). There were riddles. A girl would challenge: "Tell me, what is there between your navel and the top of your legs?" As the boy went pink she would give the answer: "Your belt."

Some of the games seemed designed to give the boys and girls an opportunity to touch each other, which they would not have (at least in theory) for the rest of the year. There was a game of forfeits that involved throwing a kind of large dry seed. If the girls lost, all the boys were entitled to take one of these seeds and tap the girls on the knee. The trick was to use this opportunity to press your knee against the back of the girl's knee, thereby giving yourself and her a tremendous thrill.

There was also a game played blindfolded, in which you were obliged to take three swipes in the direction of a hanging clay jar. If your stick broke the jar, dark red liquid would pour all over your clothes.

Even before the war it was unsafe to travel through the countryside during

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the night, because of the gangs of robbers, and so, as often as not, we would set out early the next morning to go to our little 25-acre estate near Kompong Som. We set out early in order to avoid the heat of the day. The men would load up the car while the women were making the final arrangements for the food. We had an old Land Rover. My sister Sisopha liked adding a little civilized touch to these trips: it was normally she who bought the batteries for the old Phillips tape recorder and loaded up the cassettes of Cambodian pop music that we would listen to on the way. The last thing my mother did was make sure that all the doors and windows of the house were properly locked up.

WE WERE always excited to get out of Phnom Penh, and it was our custom, if we had set off early, to stop in the first bit of countryside you come to after the airport, at the junction of routes three and four. Over a breakfast of noodle soup, my sisters would ask which road we were going to take this time. The quickest way was route four, but our favorite was route three, since it passed so many beautiful villages and rice fields, and even gave us a chance, if we wanted, to go along the coast.

But the first major point of interest was Prasath Neang Khmao, the temple of the black lady. This was a 14th-century construction, dedicated to the memory of a woman of mysterious powers. She could make herself invisible. She was in love with the king. Every night she would appear to him, warning of any plot against the throne, and everyone she accused, even the king's own relatives, would be executed the next day. On the outside of the temple there were bas-reliefs of battle scenes in which the Cambodians were engaged against the Thais or the Chams, our traditional enemies. Inside, the atmosphere was heavy with candle smoke, incense, and the smell of the flowers that the sightseers left as offerings to the ancient statue of the Buddha. We said our prayers, left our offerings and then wandered around the grounds. We had been traveling for about an hour and a half.

On the next stage of the journey we would buy gifts of food for the two men, Chan and Long, who lived and worked on our estate. There was a kind of clay jar full of crystallized palm sugar—in order to get the sugar you had to break the jar. We bought these in Takeo, and by about noon we would be turning off the main road along a winding track through the forest. This was the time of day when you would hear the whooping noise of the gibbons. There were parrots and brightly colored woodpeckers. The noise of the Land Rover made the monkeys flee from our advance. They would swing through the tops of the trees along the side of the track. When we saw the clumps of sugarcane, we knew that we were on our own land.

Chan and Long would not be working over the New Year. On hearing our car they would come down from the veranda of their house, laughing and waving, and they would take my little brothers from the Land Rover and hold them in the air above their heads. We all unloaded the provisions and opened up the larger of the two houses. It was extremely beautiful—a simple construction on stilts, with a grass roof, and walls made of a special kind of bark. We had brought soft drinks from the city. I would drink Pepsi or Coke. The men would join my father for a beer. They were cousins of his, and the arrangement was that, in return for a small wage, they ran the whole estate and sold whatever produce they could in order to support themselves.

Nobody was the manager—it was a family arrangement. But my eldest sister, Somaly, liked to think of herself as being in charge, and it was while we were sitting around having a drink that she would begin to question the two men about everything that had happened to the crops. For someone who knew nothing about farming she had a good line of questions: what had been planted since our last visit, had their been any pests, what sort of fertilizer was being used, had there been trouble from the wild boar, and so forth. Chan and Long were amused by her performance and would play her along, answering her in great detail. Of the 25 acres, about two-thirds had been put under cultivation using slash-and-burn methods. The remainder was thick forest. In addition to sugarcane there were pineapples, mangoes, cashews, jackfruit, rambutans, papayas, sweet potatoes, bananas, and lemongrass. They were just beginning to plant durian.

When we had set up our mosquito nets and beds in the single great room of our house, we would go for a walk around the estate. You would see

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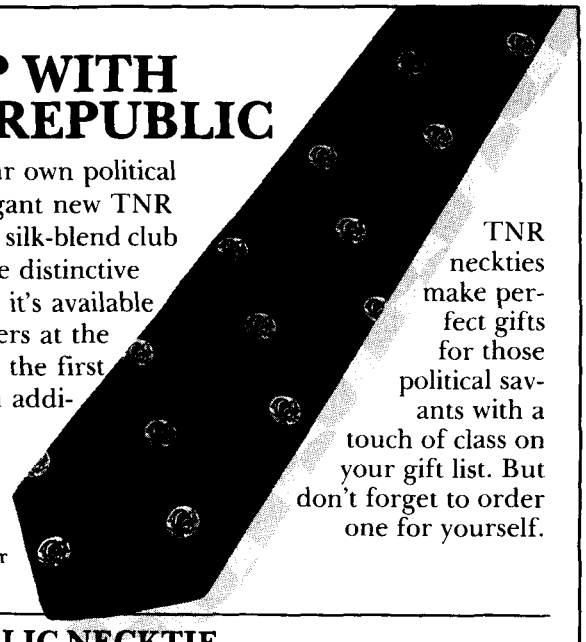

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where the wild boar had dug up the sweet potatoes. The men would point to the prints of a large cat and say "tiger." They would show us the damage the elephants had done to the bananas. They pointed out where the traps had been set for the wild boar, and warned us children not to go too near. Then it was time for the women to go down to the river to wash. There was nothing like a bathroom in either of the houses, but the river was fast and clear. I often used to fish there with a hook and a piece of pickled fish.

We would eat well before dark, to avoid the mosquitoes. Afterward we made a bonfire and sat around chatting. It was at this point that the animals would begin to move in on the crops, and we would shout at the elephants to scare them off the bananas. When my brother-in-law was with us, he used to bring an old American carbine, which he would fire into the air. Then you would hear the sound of the saplings snapping as the elephants made off into the hills. My brother-in-law had a great idea about hunting, but he never succeeded in killing anything. It wasn't that he was scared of animals. And he was a good shot. But when it came to pointing a gun at a living thing—he got scared. He was after all a devout Buddhist, and Buddhists are not supposed to kill.

ON MARCH 18, 1970, the Sihanouk regime was overthrown and Cambodia very quickly became involved in war. We had already given up our trips to the countryside, because reports in local newspapers made it clear that the roads were unsafe by day and night. There were more robbers, and the guerrilla forces who attacked the buses were in the habit of kidnapping people to join their troops. My father was optimistic about the Lon Nol regime, particularly since it included the figure he most admired, Son Ngoc Thanh. Like Thanh, we were ethnic Cambodians from South Vietnam. My father worked as a doctor in the military hospital, and my mother was a secretary in the ministry of information. For New Year's 1970, we spent the usual day at the Pagoda, followed by parties, visits to friends, trips to the cinema, and the traditional celebrations around Wat Phnom.

In the following years, my parents spent more and more of each New Year at the Pagoda, while I, as a student, became more and more independent. I would take my little Honda and go round town with my friends for a series of parties. But by April 1975 there was nothing to celebrate. The city was surrounded by the Khmer Rouge. Everywhere was within range of their rockets, and my father began building up supplies of dried foods in the house, because it was unsafe to go to the market. My brother-in-law had had a desk job in the Lon Nol army, and now my father began to tell him to get rid of any military paraphernalia from the house—the rifles and pistols that he proudly took to work, and which he never used.

I WAS 18 at the time, a medical student hoping to follow in my father's footsteps. I had a part-time job that involved waiting on foreign and Cambodian journalists at an open-air café called, importantly, the Groaning Table Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge. On April 12 we hardly saw the foreigners at breakfast time. They were all rushing off to the American Embassy for the helicopter evacuation. We had given generous, if inaccurate, credit, and most of them forgot to pay their bills. The foreign press seemed in a considerable panic, but a couple of hours later, after we had seen the helicopters leave in the distance, the Cambodian journalists came back in a more relaxed mood and told us how the Marines had slashed the tires of their own jeeps in order to block off the evacuation area. As they were telling us this, a rocket landed in the house next door, and the upper wall collapsed outward.

That was my last day at the Groaning Table. I went home and stayed at home for the New Year, which fell the next day. I had been listening in secret to the Khmer Rouge radio; I thought that when they came in a few leaders would be executed, but that the majority of the population would be all right. Many journalists, however, had reported atrocities by the Khmer Rouge, and when I thought of the way the Lon Nol soldiers had treated their prisoners, the chances of a bloodbath did seem to be strong. Friends of my father who visited the house were pessimistic, but my father did not believe them. He knew how low the morale in the Lon Nol army was, and he thought that the soldiers would simply give up fighting, and that everything would be all right. Or at least that is what he said.

At about seven o'clock on the morning of the 15th, General Dien Del, a friend of my father, arrived at our house and asked to see my father alone in his room. They talked for 15 minutes, then the general came out, said a hurried goodbye to us, and left by jeep with his personal bodyguard. His own car he left in the courtyard. My father was very gloomy and restless. He kept asking himself whether he should go off to the hospital to work. He was so worried that I did not like to ask him what Dien Del had said to him. My father was very much alone in his thoughts because my mother had left a month before, saying that she was going to America for her work. There were 15 people in our family. Although I did not then know it, my father had just refused an opportunity to go with Dien Del on his helicopter.

The following day the rocketing was such that we could not go out. My father sat in his room listening to the prayers broadcast over the radio. My sisters and I listened to tapes on our Phillips machine. My little brothers were playing a betting game that involved throwing rubber bands into squares marked on the floor. Every time we made a meal we had to break into our emergency provisions. My sister Sisopha was getting impatient. She had been invited to a friend's house for a party, and my father had forbidden her to go. From time to time she would plead with him, and my father would tell her not to be so silly—there were rockets falling everywhere. Finally she gave in. We all went to bed in a gloom.

ON APRIL 17, slightly delayed, we finally (and for the first time in five years) made our traditional trip to the country. That morning my father switched on the radio and there was only martial music. The streets were silent in the early morning. Nobody left their houses. At eight o'clock we heard shelling and gunfire from the southeast of the city. My father said nothing. He was watching my sisters playing tapes, apparently unconcerned. After about an hour he told them to turn the music off. Later, the gunfire ceased abruptly and the radio went dead. We saw soldiers in shorts, stripped of their uniforms, rushing past the house. The republic had collapsed.

When the Khmer Rouge came about an hour later, I went out and stood at the gate, watching my neighbors wel-

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coming them. People were cheering and waving their improvised white flags. The Khmer Rouge looked severe and their guns were at the ready. Many of them were younger than I was. They would ask if anybody knew the whereabouts of the republican officers, and if people said yes, they would be told to accompany the troops. They were looking above all for the seven traitors, against whom all their propaganda had been directed.

TWO JEEPS came along, the first with a mounted machine gun. Children of the district were running along cheering and laughing. Somebody from the first jeep called through a megaphone to tell everyone to bring any weapons he had and put them in the second jeep. My neighbors came out and did so. Just as a new group of Khmer Rouge was arriving, my father called me back into the house. The Khmer Rouge followed me, asked for the head of the family, and questioned my father as to whether any of us was in the military. My father by now seemed to have recovered himself: he was calm, and answered all their inquiries with a firm denial.

The man who did all the questioning kept warily looking around the house, as if he expected to be attacked at any moment. He told us we must leave the city at once. The Americans were going to bomb it. We were to pack up emergency supplies for a few days—but not too much. The evacuation would only be for a short while, and then we would be allowed back. There were other reasons for clearing the city—to find the remaining enemies and to round up the chief traitors, Im Tam, Long Boreth, Sirik Matak, Chheng Heng, and Lon Nol (who had in fact left months before).

We dithered for a while. My brother-in-law, who seemed to sense no danger to himself, suggested to me that he and I stay on to guard the property while the others went. I approached my father on this point, and he told me not be such a fool: we had already been told that if we stayed on in the city we would be "responsible for our own safety," and this phrase weighed heavily with us. By mid-afternoon we were loading up the Land Rover.

It was as if my father had done all the planning that my mother used to do. He had got together plenty of rice, dried fish, salt, tinned food, containers of water, a spare can of petrol, blankets, mosquito nets, tarpaulins, pots and pans, plates and spoons. My sisters put the clothes in and Sisopha took the Phillips tape recorder. My brother-in-law was still very attached to some of his uniforms, which my father told him to throw away quickly. I put in my diaries and my favorite books. I took Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Eric Williams's *The Wooden Horse*, Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*, a French textbook called Mauger, and an English grammar book. We all took what we wanted. My father seemed to take nothing.

This time it was my brother-in-law who locked up the house. We set out on exactly the same route as we would have taken all those years ago, among crowds of people who were shouting out, trying not to lose contact with their families. My father drove very slowly with the children in the car. The adults walked alongside through the heat of the day. We passed the mutilated bodies of soldiers and families who had been shot for refusing to leave their houses. After four hours we had covered about two kilometers. This was the first checkpoint, and very frightening. They took some medicines, my watch, and the tape recorder.

On the second day we reached Pochentong Market, and waited with the milling crowd to see what would happen next. On the third day we were forced to move on. We got as far as the soup shop where routes three and four divide—our favorite breakfast stop. Here my father and all of us buried our identification cards. Route four was blocked. People were already leaving their cars by the roadside, having run out of petrol. We pushed on, after a couple of days' wait—we still had a faint hope that we might be allowed back to Phnom Penh.

It was on route three that I realized we were going to the country forever. It was here too that I saw a man confess to having been a doctor. He was taken off, and the next day, as I was looking for water, I found his corpse. After about two weeks, during much of which we had been pushing the Land Rover, we decided to abandon the vehicle altogether. We had been thoroughly checked about ten times, but no military material had been found. Others were less fortunate. They were taken off over the fields, out of sight, and we would hear gunshots.

All in all it took us about a month and a half, instead of an hour and a half, to get to Prasath Neang Khmao, the tem-

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ple of the black lady. By now supplies were running short and people were stealing from each other. When fights broke out among the evacuees, both sides were taken away by the Khmer Rouge. The old people were already dying along the way, in a dry, devastated landscape that had once been so green and delightful. When we had first set off, some people had seemed quite cheerful. But now nobody was.

The temple of the black lady had become the first registration office for the evacuees. The carvings on the outside wall had been badly damaged by the war. Inside, the big statue was still in place, but all the others had been stacked around the walls and the shelves of the altar were empty. Armed men in neat black uniforms watched us constantly as we placed our belongings at one end of the room. Two soldiers sat at a small wooden table and we were told to sit on the floor in front of them. My father said to the interrogators that we were farmers. Somebody at the other end of the room tipped out my books and shouted: "What are these? What are they all about?" A soldier picked up *The Wooden Horse* and pretended to read it very carefully. He was holding it upside down. I looked at my father and saw that he was stuck for words. "Those books belong to me, comrades," I said. "I picked them up on the road. I thought they would be good for rolling tobacco."

"Well," said the soldier reading Eric Williams, "there are plenty of banana leaves where you're going. You don't need this junk," and he took *The Wooden Horse* and threw it into the corner of the temple, onto a huge pile of photographs and money.

This was as far as we went on the road to our old estate. After that, we were allocated to villages and labor camps. My father survived about ten weeks before he was taken, tortured, and killed. The younger members of my family died of disease and malnutrition in due course. Somaly, the great farm manager, and her husband couldn't cope with the farming. They were put with other sick people into a field and shelled. Another sister, Mealea, criticized the regime and suffered the consequences. Of the 15 family members who set out, four of us escaped to Thailand. My father had left me in charge of the family. In order to survive, I became a liar, a thief, a smuggler, a refugee, and a stateless person.

The Khmer Rouge abolished the New Year and substituted the anniversary of the Glorious Day, April 17, so it has been a long time since I have thought about those traditional celebrations and the fun we had. The blindfolded man took three swipes at the clay jar above his head. If the jar broke, his clothes were drenched with red liquid. The Khmer Rouge took three swipes at Phnom Penh. The city broke, and our blood spilled out over the land.

THE WAGES OF LOVE

Men and Angels by Mary Gordon

(Random House, 241 pp., $16.95)

In one of the Irish writer Mary Lavin's stories, a woman stands beside her dying husband's bed and hears bird-song for the first time in years, "so loud [had been] the noise of their love in her ears." This moment has always seemed the quintessential expression of the triumph and danger of a fulfilling love, conjugal or parental: even the healthiest of loves can be consuming, limiting, threatening to the world and to the self, which is implacably single. And yet—the question hangs beside its unambiguous but not uncomplicated answer—what is the self without profound engagement with others?

Mary Gordon's third novel, *Men and Angels*, is a fine amplification of Lavin's paradox. Gracefully written, with a sustained fierceness new to her work, it is complex in its vision of family and motherhood, and pained, finally, at the terms we must make, all of us (for if we are not all parents, we were all once children), with a universe that apportions love and its rewards unjustly.

Anne Foster, possessor of a Harvard Ph.D. in art history and of a household that contains her much loved husband, Michael, and a young son and daughter, is a woman haunted only by the fear that she has too much, has been too lucky, and therefore that she could at any moment lose it all. In this, her 38th year, she is at work with great absorption writing the catalog for an exhibition of the somewhat neglected paintings of an American woman, Caroline Watson, who went to Paris in the 1880s and had the misfortune "to be a merely first-rate painter in an age of geniuses."

MARY GORDON sends Anne's husband to France on an academic exchange, thus freeing her of the comfortable "noise" of her marriage to hear for the first time the birdcalls of many kinds of creatures. She concentrates on her work for its own sake, and so that "refreshed she could dive back down to the dense underworld, to her children." She is befriended by Jane, Caroline Watson's formidable daughter-in-law, who, together with Caroline, seems to have thrived on the inadequacy of Caroline's pathetic son, dead early of a lack of love and confidence. Suspecting her perfect husband of a dalliance in France, Anne falls in something like love with a young electrician whose wife's chronic illness makes him vulnerable. (To say this, incidentally, gives nothing away: Gordon, like Marge Piercy and others—perhaps we could go back to Jane Austen—has a formulaic weakness for certain male characters who, even in the face of momentary surliness or unseemly working-class occupations, are graced with aesthetically and morally impeccable habits, princes in disguise.)

The most decisive step Anne takes during this year of ostensible freedom is to reluctantly hire a young woman named Laura, because no mother can accomplish work that demands concentration without someone to help with her children. Unlovely and unloved, Laura arrives out of the limbo of utter homelessness, trusting in the Jesus who commanded that one leave one's parents, taking "neither gold nor silver . . . nor two tunics nor a staff," to serve, even to kill, for the Lord, to do anything necessary to advance righteousness in the world. She will, we know from the start, bring the whole house down, though not necessarily in the ways we (or Anne) might fear.

Men and Angels begins in Laura's con-

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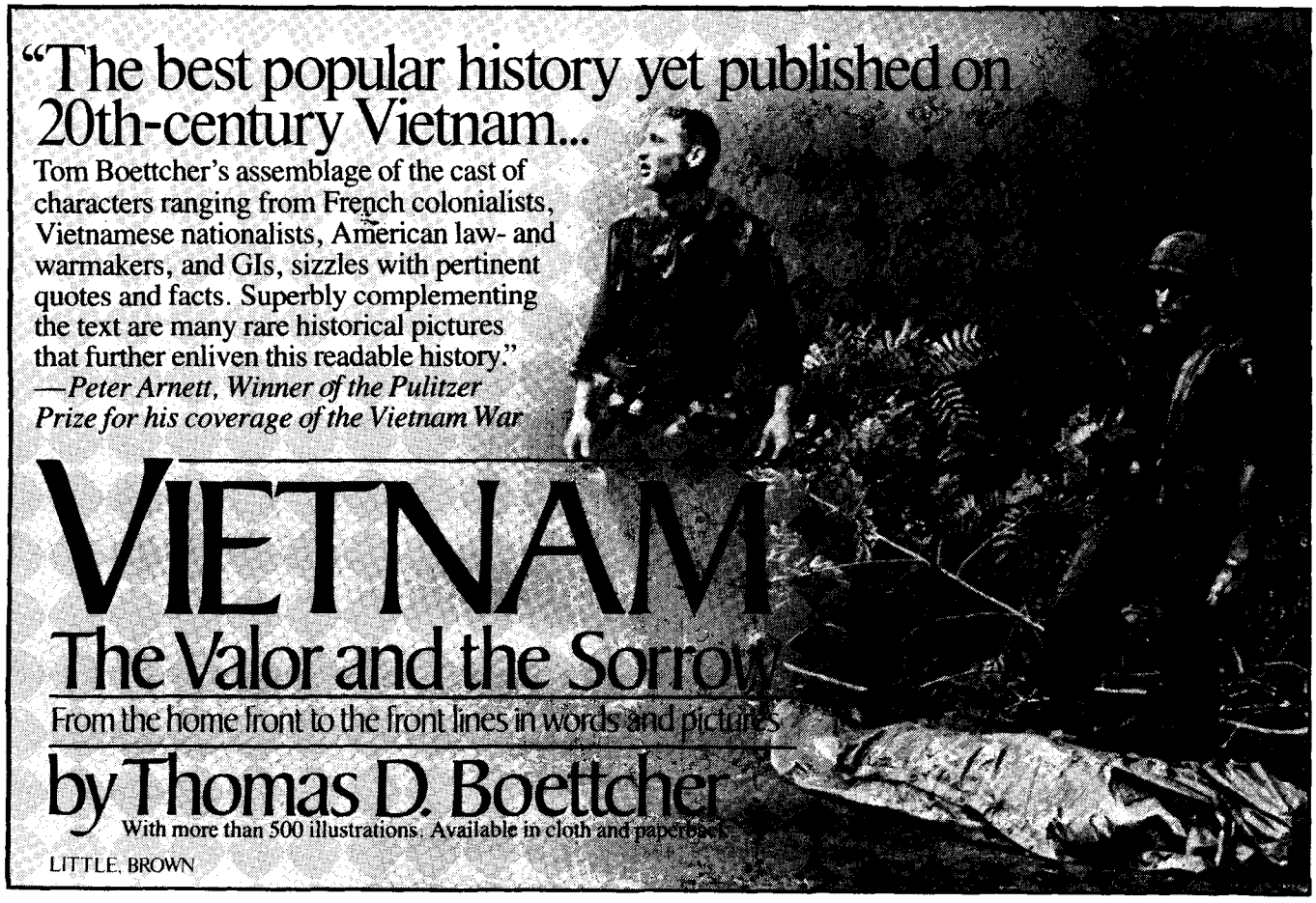
sciousness, which is fixed, desperate, essentially mad. She has grown up the victim of one of many kinds of child abuse that fascinate Gordon—in this case, the monstrousness of a mother who does not love her and does not dissemble about it. The vengeful havoc Laura wreaks strips Anne and her children of the luck of their lifelong belovedness, of the carefully nurtured perfection of their life.

Men and Angels is lush with the details of family intimacy, unlike Gordon's first two novels. The life of Felicitas in *The Company of Women* was lived primarily among virgins and widows, under the beneficent reign of a priest who is impossible father and lover to them all. In *Final Payments* Isobel yields to the patriarchy of her bedridden father, his Irish-Catholic cronies, and their negligent contempt for women. *Men and Angels*, by contrast, portrays motherhood and wifehood relished in wonderfully seductive detail: "[The children] took turns measuring the cocoa, the sugar, the milk, the pinch of salt . . . There are my children, Anne said to herself, these are the ones I missed. She could smell their thin high sweat; they should have taken off their sweaters. But it was autumn and she understood their feelings: woolen clothes on such a day were a pleasure in themselves."

At the same time she recognizes the costs of such commitment: "Marriage muffled, it protected, it made it much more difficult to be generous because you were always kept back a little from the lives of others, and so from feeling their need," Anne reflects; and she finds that motherhood muffles further. "But now she was a woman with young children; she couldn't possibly do anything dangerous to them. The whole shape of her life must be constructed to make her children safe." Curious not merely about the work but about the life of Caroline Watson, Anne thinks "yet one wanted to know, when the women had accomplished something. Whom did they love in relation to their bodies? Whom were they connected to by blood? . . . But it wasn't the fact of connection that was interesting; it was how they got around it."

What binds all of Gordon's work together, whatever its differences, is her unique fascination with the idea of love and its derivatives, the lovable, the unlovable, the unloved, subcategories as ineluctable as election and damnation. Most novelists, it goes without saying, entangle their characters in questions of love and the power it gives and withholds: its acquisition, its maintenance, its loss. But the capacity to love and be loved—abstract as a Platonic ideal, however graphic its realization as plot—is a fairly unique preoccupation these days. One thinks of Hawthorne's *Tales*, perhaps of the woman perfect but for the birthmark on her cheek; or the aftermath of such death-of-the-heart novels as Elizabeth Bowen's, or Antonia White's *Frost in May*, or Robb Forman Dew's recent *The Time of Her Life*, which makes the disillusion attendant on a child's loss of love a permanent incapacitating scar. But in those books events befall, they are not inevitable. People choose their fates; the end is not written in the beginning. I can't think of one of her contemporaries who shares quite the same psychological/aesthetic determinism as Mary Gordon, whose vision of a gated kingdom, of a fiery excluding sword raised against the charmless, seems to shimmer in her imagination constantly.

In Gordon's work, loving is not so much a process as it is a state, given like grace; a condition, like beauty, into which one is born. There is no appeal-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ing its presence or absence in one's life: it is absolute, untouchable even by the love of God, which "means nothing to a heart that is starved of human love." That is Mary Gordon's catch-22: for those who are most in need of its light, like flowers in a dark place, no love can penetrate or suffice. They are like instruments whose receptors are damaged, who give out a single mechanical cry of pain and need that, perversely, repels salvation.

In *The Company of Women*, Muriel, who has "a styptic heart," envies and resents Felicitas, the child of grace, even as she loves her. In *Final Payments*, Margaret, representing every ounce of salt and vinegar Gordon can conjure up, the life-denying constriction of nuns without bodies, fights for the soul of Isobel, who has just—barely—leaped free into the pleasures of the contemporary secular world. Finally, in *Men and Angels*, though the Catholic church is hardly mentioned (Laura represents her own distorted church, a religion of desperation and defensiveness), the agon is still familiar. Anne is elect, as are her children. Laura sues for her love and, losing, guarantees only one thing: that, having laid waste the kingdom of the graced by taking away the certainty of safety and sewing guilt and self-doubt, she will never be forgotten.

The girl's abjectness is echoed many times over. Caroline Watson, the painter whose letters Anne reads with fascination, is a terrible mother. She is given the single-mindedness of the artist too preoccupied to notice that her child is waiting patiently at the door while she works. (In fact it is worse: she hears him but does not respond.) Yet it appears to be her son's innate lack of appeal and force, not merely her need to get a day's work done, that keeps her from loving him. Cause and effect are a bit vague—undoubtedly both are true—yet Caroline at her death shoulders the blame for blighting him. And we are shown, conversely, how the (rather too simple) love of the electrician, Ed, saves his small son from the vagaries of a deranged mother's attentions.

ON THE WAY to the novel's conclusion, in which nothing is resolved except that there is no democracy of the affections, and that the emotionally hungry, whom we shall always have with us, will forever endanger the feasts of the fortunate, Gordon draws a hundred small moments beautifully. Anne, at 38, weeps because her parents no longer rush to succor her when she needs them. She buys tulip bulbs in too many colors because she "hadn't the courage for a unified field; she couldn't live with leaving so much out." Her six-year-old daughter is humiliated in a ballet performance, betrayed only by her youth and eagerness. Anne begins to comprehend the complexity of certain sexual charades, the "lively attentiveness that came only with sex" but might in fact mask other needs. The novel has its flaws—Laura frequently becomes as tedious in print as she is said to be in person, revealing herself to be the contrivance that holds together the skeleton of moral concerns beneath the book's more poignant flesh. The epilogue iterates too explicitly what we have seen, casting a skein of sentimentality over the rest that it doesn't deserve.

But *Men and Angels* is a beautifully written, passionate inquiry into many kinds of vulnerability and power, and an acknowledgment of the pain of trying to balance instinctual love with a more encompassing compassion. If compassion is inadequate, so be it, Mary Gordon says through Anne: "Perhaps she was an adult now . . . Children's terror, children's sorrow, was all based on disappointment; adults took their grief from certainty and loss." Such maturity becomes both character and author. This is Mary Gordon's finest book.

ROSELLEN BROWN

Rosellen Brown is the author most recently of *Civil Wars* (Knopf).

COMPLEX FREUDIAN

Helene Deutsch: A Psychoanalyst's Life by Paul Roazen

(Anchor Press/Doubleday, 371 pp., $19.95)

Few among the shifting group that surrounded Freud lived on into a flourishing and Freud-blessed psychoanalytic old age. Freud himself complained of "his Viennese," and early photographs show the suave professor surrounded by what looks like a gang of eccentric cutthroats. To be attracted to Freudianism, in the early days, was to presuppose unconventionality, and some tendency to be a misfit or an outsider. Freud quarreled with most of the early disciples sooner or later; some committed suicide; some, like Jung and Adler, set up rival outposts. But the disciples who were attracted to the group rather later, around or after the First World War, seem to have been of a more stable variety. They were joining a group that already had some standing and organization. Among these, Helene Deutsch was one who survived successfully and acceptably to become a reigning submonarch of psychoanalysis.

Yet unlike Anna Freud or Karen Horney, she is almost forgotten today. Where she has attracted attention, it has been because of attacks by feminists on her *Psychology of Women*, a jumbled attempt to extend Freudian theory, without defying its basic principles, to an area where it is particularly inadequate; a mixture of valid insights and dubious generalizations. The irony is that while Deutsch never quite broke away from the Freudian slant on women, she lived as successful a professional life herself as any feminist could wish. Yet she never simplified the issues: she felt that her profession had demanded a price from her as sexual woman and mother.

Helene Rosenbach was born in Przemyśl, Poland, into a Jewish professional family, the youngest child and, according to her, an unwanted one. Throughout her life she affirmed a steadfast hatred of her mother, whom she characterized as shallow and cruel. This would seem to be a bad start for such a confident and active career, but she was devoted to her father and he to her; and true to Freudian theory she believed that identification with the father made it easier for a woman to have a career. At any rate she grew up independent and ambitious, determined to achieve and to be different.

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In conformity with her rejection of her mother and the conventionally feminine, she saw three men as the great influences in her life (her husband is noticeably missing from the list):

> Looking back, I see three distinct upheavals in my life: liberation from the tyranny of my mother; the revelation of socialism; and my release from the chains of the unconscious. In each of these three revolutions I was inspired and aided by a man—my father, Herman Lieberman . . . and lastly Freud.

Helene first met and fell in love with Herman Lieberman, 14 years her senior, when she was only 14. He was a lawyer like her father and a dedicated Polish socialist, unhappily but firmly married. For nearly a decade the relationship was comradely and idealistic. Later, when Helene left her family to become a medical student in Vienna, it became an affair. But Lieberman showed no signs of leaving his wife. Eventually, in 1911 when she was 26, she made a break that she was always to feel ambivalent about, and became engaged to a medical contemporary, Felix Deutsch.

She married Deutsch a year later, and qualified as a doctor when she was 28. Felix seems to have been chosen in distinct contrast to the fiery socialist Lieberman: he was quiet and humorous, a dandified character who had gone prematurely bald. They had a son and remained together for life, but it was a patchy marriage in which Felix was always overshadowed by his vigorous wife, and he remained on the edge of the psychoanalytic circles of which she was a fully paid-up member. Helene had never been particularly interested in medicine, and as soon as she qualified began to specialize in psychiatry. It was in 1918 that she went to Freud for training, and from then on—until the last, American section of her life—her story belongs to the strange annals of early psychoanalysis.

WHILE SHE was still in analysis with Freud, a storm broke over her that might have daunted any other fledgling psychoanalyst. One of the most promising of Freud's disciples, Victor Tausk, asked Freud for analysis, and instead of being accepted was sent to the young Helene as a patient. (Roazen has already told this story in *Brother Animal* and lifts out his account of it here almost word for word.) Helene was herself in analysis with Freud and had never taken a patient before; for Tausk the referral was a dramatic humiliation. To Helene as analyst, he talked of nothing but his feelings about Freud; and Helene in her turn talked about Tausk in *her* analysis with Freud. After some months Freud ordered that Tausk's analysis be stopped. Tausk committed suicide. Freud's reaction was without remorse. Was Helene Deutsch tainted with some of the same tough coldness? When she was safe in the States in the thirties, she and Felix Deutsch refused to help an old friend with the fare and he was sent to a concentration camp. Her son, when he grew up, was as hostile to her as she had been to her own mother.

THE TAUSK episode seems, if anything, to have bound Helene Deutsch more closely to Freud. She was always devoted to him; when she brought two boxes of cigars home as presents and one was stolen, the remaining one went to Freud, not to Felix. As a woman she escaped the intense rivalry that Freud maintained with his male colleagues. She began to rise high in the movement, and in the twenties and early thirties was the first president of the Training Institute of the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society—a powerful position.

Without disloyalty to Freud, however, she seems to have had a common sense attitude to the claims of psychoanalysis, and with clinical flair to have understood that human sympathy was probably the strongest factor at work in treatment. "I don't want," she wrote, "to practice my profession, as until now, with complete engagement of my personality, and above all, not with this rigid adherence to the phantom of 'Freudian Method'. . . ." Analysts, she said, "unconsciously elevate psychoanalysis to be their battle cry, to be the one and only path to blessedness."

Helene Deutsch's most celebrated concept, apart from her work on women, was that of the "as if" personality. With a rich and expressive personality herself, she was obviously fascinated by the type of person whose whole functioning seems not neurotic, but basically shallow and unreal. The "as if" person can be intellectually sound and apparently utterly "normal," but all his emotional life is a kind of empty parody of real feeling. He is ready to follow leaders and join any movement that gives him an identity (and here she may have been thinking of the rise of anti-Semitism and fascism). This is clearly an attempt to come to grips with the problems of self and identity that grew from the forties onward, in Sartre's concepts of inauthenticity and bad faith, in D. W. Winnicott's and R. D. Laing's writings on the false self.

When the Deutsches fled to America to escape the Nazis, Helene was in great demand as an analyst, and held a position of influence in the supervision of training analyses. Psychoanalysis had now become orthodoxy and was about to sweep America; Helene Deutsch's analysts-in-training were not the strange and vivid crew of Vienna, but respectable young "as if" physicians. Roazen quotes from her reports on candidates, and we can see the representative of the original Old World psychoanalysis rather amusingly trying to come to terms with the shape of things to come. "Dr. Q.'s analysis is a slow, monotonous drive through a desert," she wrote, and "Dr. S. is a very intelligent psychiatrist, and has a good psychological understanding, but the whole analysis is remarkably undramat-

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ic, so to say *'flat.'* " A touch of Viennese neurosis would have been appreciated.

Helene Deutsch lived on in Boston to a great old age, working through much of it. Paul Roazen has had a great deal of material to draw on, and the cooperation of Deutsch herself; yet there remains something unfocused about the biography. He is prone to throw out obscure oversimplifications, such as (of Freud) that he ceased sexual relations with his wife and "instead of turning to another woman . . . discovered psychoanalysis." Since Helene Deutsch did not die until 1982, it would have been interesting to have seen her through the eyes of people who knew her; there must be some alive, but no one is quoted as saying "what she was *really* like was this or that." Yet it is a worthwhile life story, and it adds yet more to what we know about the fascinating, if murky, early history of psychoanalysis.

ROSEMARY DINNAGE

Rosemary Dinnage writes about psychology and literature for the *TLS* and elsewhere.

MOTHERS IN THE CITY

Later the Same Day by Grace Paley

(Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 224 pp., $13.95)

American short-story writers are a tough breed in any event—standing firm in a country where the average reader prefers a novel—but Grace Paley must be one of the toughest. Not only does she continue to produce stories, and usually very brief ones; she continues to speak in a voice so absolutely her own that a single line, one suspects, could be identified as hers among a hundred other lines. She is resolute, stalwart, vigorous. She is urban to an unusual degree, cataloging both the horrors and the surprising pockets of green in her native New York City. And she is unique, or very nearly unique, in her ability to fit large-scale political concerns both seamlessly and effectively onto very small canvases.

The stories collected in *The Little Disturbances of Man* (1959) and *Enormous Changes of the Last Minute* (1974) brought to our attention a particular kind of heroine: the gritty, embattled urban mother. Sometimes on welfare, sometimes not, generally between husbands, fiercely protective of her children but often a little sloppy with her housekeeping, this woman had different names but always the same amused, ironic voice—a sort of "Oh, well" tone, accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders. In the case of Faith, the most endearing of these women, the shrug was meant solely for her own messy life, never for the messy state of the world, which she was constantly hoping (and picketing, and petitioning) to alter.

Faith is the character who emerges most clearly from this new collection, and she's the one who gives special meaning to the title. It is, indeed, later the same day: the woman we observed rearing her two little boys alone and dealing with the middle age of her parents is now middle-aged herself. Now she is coping with her parents' old age and with the eventual death of her mother. She is facing the fact that even though romantic love continues to interest her, it will have to be weighted with a history of past loves. And when she worries about her sons, it is because they are beyond her reach, out in that very world she's been trying to change all these years.

In "Friends" a woman who is Faith's contemporary is dying of cancer. They've known each other since the day they met in the park with their babies. ("I think a bond was sealed then," Faith tells us, "at least as useful as the vow we'd all sworn with husbands to whom we're no longer married.") The talk at Selena's deathbed is of children grown and lost. "You know the night [my daughter] died," Salena says, "when the police called me and told me? That was my first night's sleep in two years. I *knew* where she was." And Faith—in one of those trade-offs by which the lucky mothers appease the unlucky mothers—responds by claiming she has no idea where her son is, although in fact he keeps in touch admirably.

"Dreamer in a Dead Language" takes us to Children of Judea, Home for the Golden Ages, Coney Island Branch, where Faith's parents live—still her parents no matter what, still capable of wounding and distressing her. Faith's mother has settled in but her father is itching to leave, protesting, writing love poems, unresigned. He doesn't feel old at all, he says:

> Trotsky pointed out, the biggest surprise that comes to a man is old age. O.K. That's what I mean, I don't feel it. Surprise. Isn't that interesting that he had so much to say on every subject. Years ago I didn't have the right appreciation of him. Thrown out the front door of history, sneaks in the window to sit in the living room, excuse me, I mean I do not feel old. Do NOT. In any respect. You understand me, Faith?

Faith has hung on to her political fervor, as have the other characters in this collection. In "Anxiety" a woman leans out her apartment window to harangue a young father. "Son," she says, "I must tell you that madmen intend to destroy this beautifully made planet. That the murder of our children by these men has got to become a terror and a sorrow to you, and starting now, it had better interfere with any daily pleasure." In the old days, she reflects, these windows were full of various women issuing their orders and instructions. It's a thought that calls up an instant image of the Paley heroine: arms akimbo, jaw set pugnaciously, but her head now grayer and body thicker.

WHEN characters meet on these pages, it's at the National Meeting of Town Meetings or the League for Revolutionary Youth. When they travel, it's to observe socialist societies. When they start a conversation with an attractive man, their subject is the ecological damage in Vietnam. Yet they avoid self-righteousness; they're not offensive. The reason, I believe, is that Grace Paley never loses sight of the personal. She is in touch with those individual lives affected by the larger issues; she can tally the cost of what she calls the "expensive moment," the private sacrifice that historical considerations may demand.

> We were speaking, the Chinese woman said. About the children, how to raise them. My youngest sister is permitted to have a child this year, so we often talk thoughtfully. This is what we think: Shall

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we teach them to be straightforward, honorable, kind, brave, maybe shrewd, self-serving a little? What is the best way to help them in the real world? We don't know the best way. You don't want them to be cruel, but you want them to take care of themselves wisely. Now my own children are nearly grown. Perhaps it's too late. Was I foolish? I didn't know in those years how to do it.

Yes, yes, said Faith. I know what you mean. Ruthy?

Ruthy remained quiet.

Faith waited a couple of seconds. Then she turned to the Chinese woman. Oh, Xie Feng, she said. Neither did I.

There is humor, too; that always helps—a kind of running thread of humor underlying nearly every passage. And there's an earthy, angular style of speech. If I had to summarize this book's best feature, though, I would quote a single sentence. It's a line referring to Faith and her friends, but it describes Grace Paley's stories equally well: "They were all, even Edie, ideologically, spiritually, and on puritanical principle against despair."

ANNE TYLER

Reconsideration: 'Fire in the Lake.'

STILL BURNING

BY STEPHEN SESTANOVICH

IT IS understandable that, for most American writers on Vietnam, our war took pride of place over their revolution. The war seemed both easier and more important to judge, and excited the greater passions. Trying to comprehend the revolution that lay beneath the war was for academics, or partisans. Yet for all the passion, how the war was fought became at some point a historical question, increasingly for scholars. Not so the course of the revolution. It matters now, as it should have mattered then, whether one understood that the Vietnamese revolution would turn out badly.

This is the shadow that hangs over *Fire in the Lake*, which, with its Pulitzer and Bancroft prizes and National Book Award, was easily the most honored (and probably the most influential) American book about the Vietnam War. In 1972 Frances FitzGerald dared to hope, and hesitantly to predict, that when the war was done the people of Vietnam would not be betrayed.

What was behind the failure to foresee? In fact, an extremely sophisticated analysis: FitzGerald did not make the easy mistakes, she made complicated ones. She understood, it should be said, whom she was writing about. She did not echo those who a generation earlier had called Mao a nationalist, or an agrarian reformer. Others, to be sure, said the same of the Vietnamese Communists, but *Fire in the Lake* reported plainly that they were Marxist-Leninists.

FitzGerald went beyond this uncomfortable truth. Apart from honors and influence, her book was also the most ambitious on the subject. She aspired to show that Marxism-Leninism was the modern ideology most in tune with Vietnamese culture. The long first half of *Fire in the Lake* was devoted to this argument, and to showing the obstacles that culture put in the way of U.S. policy. The Americans might believe their goal was to establish democracy based on pluralism, but "the Vietnamese were not interested in pluralism, they were interested in unanimity." Their traditions put a premium on "containment of anger" and, in politics, on "accommodation" (not to be confused with compromise).

If building democracy was hopeless, building communism was not. "The socialization of the means of production, the centralization of power in the state"—these might not be suitable in the West, but in Vietnam they presented fewer, as FitzGerald gently termed them, "difficulties of application":

> By contrast to almost all Western countries, Vietnam traditionally possessed no institutions independent of the state—neither guilds nor corporations nor churches nor feudal fiefs. . . . The "feudalism" of the warlords and, later, the landlords was no more than an ad hoc system of exploitation—pervasive, but by all Confucian standards illegitimate.

A cultural perspective, in short, could make the otherwise uncomfortable truth—that Vietnam's new order would be Marxist-Leninist—a little more comfortable. Imposing this order need not mean cruelly suppressing all else: there *was* nothing else. With this in mind, America could withdraw without regrets about what might ensue. Vietnam was a small country, and "would need none of the great powers' grandiose illusions—or their grandiose brutalities."

Fitting Vietnam perfectly to a Communist mold involved a certain amount of strain, and some of the cultural evidence FitzGerald brought to bear was not convincing. Consider the Marxist-Leninist view that truth is what advances class interest and can be bent accordingly. FitzGerald found that the Confucian influences on Vietnamese society taught much the same lesson. The Communists' power-serving terminologies were not so different from the traditional "rectification of names"—the new names and notions needed when the times are out of joint. (In this fashion, for example, the Vietcong's propaganda could be absolved of "lying." They were just "making themselves comprehensible to their countrymen.") It is hard to believe that some of her comparisons were other than whimsically meant, such as the astonishing translation of Marx's "withering away of the state" into a mystical Taoist concept: the "emperor who rules by non-doing."

YET quite apart from fine points, and even before we knew the war's aftermath, FitzGerald's argument had a disturbing side. The absence in Vietnamese tradition of individualism, of social formations that could rival the state, was meant to show that the people wanted what the Communists had to offer. At a minimum, they would readily accept it. But did it really show anything more than that they had no choice? Their culture literally disarmed them (even as they took up arms). Put this way, the argument was quickly reduced to tautology: a weak society is vulnerable to the exploitation of the well-organized, who in our time often do have "grandiose brutalities" in mind. This may be—probably is—a

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Stephen Sestanovich is a Soviet specialist on the National Security Council staff. These are his own views.

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very accurate description of what happened in Vietnam. But it certainly loses the justifying power that FitzGerald sought to give it.

Given the American experience there, one admittedly has to hesitate before calling Vietnamese society weak. It was strong enough to drive masses of people forward in huge enterprises that required unrelenting, unthinking sacrifice. But its strength against the outside world should be distinguished from its weakness, in a sense, against itself. Vietnamese society desperately lacked the internal bulwarks that afford protection against a modern state, especially an ideological one.

FitzGerald did not address this question directly, but as though to answer it—and to bolster her forecast of postwar harmony—she added an unusual political argument to *Fire in the Lake*'s cultural analysis. If the vulnerability of traditional Vietnamese society were a problem, she implied, it would be made less worrisome, less acute by the populist traditions that were being created in the very course of a chaotic guerrilla war.

The most important—and newest—part of the Vietnamese revolutionary experience, in FitzGerald's view, was a bond of trust between fighters and villagers. For a change, those who sought power depended on the people, for their lives and their livelihood (that is, for both protection and food). The insurgency would succeed only by sustaining popular support, and would in turn sustain popular support only by treating the peasants well. This was part of what she meant in saying, "If the north was indeed trying to conquer the south, it was doing so by politics and culture but not by force."

Guerrillas who were not respectful and responsive to the people would not win. In this way FitzGerald neatly made the military course of "people's war" a barometer of its popularity, a measure of genuine political (not merely cultural) consent. It also afforded a vision of what was to come: "The NLF organizations were . . . training camps where the new men and the new society would be formed."

Fire in the Lake has been criticized for a romantic view of the Vietcong—criticisms that refer to passages like this:

> [T]he guerrillas were attempting not to restore the old village but rather to make some connection between the world of the village and that of the cities. The land mine was in itself the synthesis. . . . Having themselves manufactured a land mine, the villagers had a new source of power—an inner life to their community. In burying it—a machine—into the earth, they infused a new meaning into the old image of their society. . . . The NLF had shown them all a way . . . to remake the village with the techniques of the outside world. "Socialism" . . . indicated to the Vietnamese peasantry that the revolution would entail no traumatic break with the past, no abandonment of the village earth and the ancestors.

FitzGerald did not stop at this idealized portrait, but gave it an extra ideological twist. Many readers, for example, might gladly have granted that rank-and-file National Liberation Fighters had deep popular loyalties. Yet going still further, FitzGerald credited their Communist Party leaders with an even more intense concern to please the people. "The Party cadre," she said, "had to serve as an example of courage, discipline, and abstemiousness. He had . . . to descend to the status of a model 'servant of the people.' "

THE MOST serious flaw, however, in her account of the ties between guerrillas and people was not romanticism. It was the assumption that their mutual dependence would continue once the war was won. Victory would obviously end the guerrilla's reliance, such as it was, on the peasant who offered him food and kept his secrets. What then?

In *On Revolution*, her comparison of the American, French, and Russian experiences, Hannah Arendt observed that the political institutions created in the course of revolutionary turmoil are almost always highly participatory, but also that they almost never endure, even if the revolution "succeeds." (*Soviets*—the people's councils—were the characteristic form of 1917. It has been a long time since they defined the Soviet system, except in name.)

The extreme cultural vulnerability implied by FitzGerald's analysis helps to explain why this pattern was repeated once more in Vietnam. What is not explained is why she didn't take her own analysis more seriously: the very same traditions that helped the Communists to gain power also helped them to secure it and then to make resistance impossible.

The reasons to have expected the harsh and intrusive use of power by the Vietnamese Communists were hardly limited to the legacy of the past. The Communists' ambitions for the future also pointed them toward extreme control. Again, FitzGerald herself said as much. The existing egalitarianism of Vietnamese society meant that a thoroughgoing attack on its class structure would not be called for. But to prepare peasants for managing any form of modern organization, it would be necessary to "change [their] consciousness." The obstacles to this task of the revolution, she admitted, were great:

> In Vietnam, as in China, the fact that an official came from a peasant background did not insure that he would behave like one of the people. Whatever background he came from, he would not be immunized against the familiar "diseases" of "authoritarianism," "cliquishness," "love of red tape," and so forth.

This was "not a social, but a psychological problem." As she put it, a man could "become a 'feudalist' if he behaved like one." What happened, of course, to anyone guilty of having "become" a feudalist was not likely to be very nice. There *was* a "class enemy" in Vietnam, latent in every person's capacity for incorrect thoughts.

If this were the mammoth psychological problem that the revolution intended to solve, Marxism-Leninism was certain to face far more severe "difficulties of application" in Vietnam than FitzGerald had earlier suggested. These might be just as harrowing as in the West, perhaps more so. And the process might be equally protracted.

The revolution's duration was an important matter for FitzGerald: she had seen yet another resonance with revolutionary Communism in the Confucian tradition that during times of change "poetry, painting, and feasting" must be temporarily put aside. Though this might extend even to book-burning, it was "a sign of moral clarity, order, and self-control." The self-denying Communists "participated in this tradition"—their black pajamas were a matter of principle—but austerity was not a permanent part of the new order being created. There would "be time for the expansion of the self and the indulgence in material plenty and the private pursuits of the intellect" when the revolution was completed, not before.

FitzGerald, in short, expected the revolution's populism to continue, its material and aesthetic harshness to abate. Instead, for reasons she set forth all too well, close to the opposite has occurred—responsiveness to the people has tended to erode, but without com-

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pensating enjoyments like "poetry and feasting."

The revolution foreseen in *Fire in the Lake* was a revolution of self-purification. Its dimensions could not be fully known in advance; too detailed a critique of FitzGerald's forecast is certainly not fair. Yet it is worth recalling that for her the one force that, above all others, could magnify the postwar convulsion was the American effort itself. In prolonging the war, the United States would simply make the revolutionary aftermath worse. American reviewers, and others, tended to agree. As one put it, "We can postpone this [cleansing], but only by polluting the lake even more, and making the flame fiercer at the end."

THIS WAS the final and strongest indictment of the long and confused U.S. involvement in Vietnam. If we were to lose, better not to fight: every ounce of effort would be repaid in later suffering, mostly by others. As it described the fate of Vietnamese who compromised themselves by working with the Americans, the indictment had real force. Nevertheless, the course of events since 1975 has in some ways muddied even this simple conclusion.

From the moment of their victory, the Communists have seemed not to know quite what to do with Saigon—where the impact of France, of America, of their wars and occupations was greatest. FitzGerald's prose was nowhere so lurid as in describing the city's lowlife: its filth and overcrowding, its black market, its gangs, prostitutes, and sharp operators of all sorts.

A decade after the war, however, journalists and other visitors to Vietnam are told that the "Saigon" problem, which includes other cities that have been corrupted to lesser degrees, has stumped the regime. Westernization—the sum of those corrupting outside influences that were supposed to have stoked the full fury of the Vietnamese revolution in the first place—may now, paradoxically, be a force for moderation in official policy.

During and after its war with America, Vietnam built a tyranny with some of the ugliest political concepts ever developed in the West. There could be few more ironic judgments on each side's struggle than to find this tyranny partly held in check by those social consequences of war that the West least intended, and of which it was most ashamed. □

TRB, *from page 4*

eignty for no better reason than to preserve or extend its sphere of influence.

Well, why not? Geopolitics isn't just a game. It's ultimately about freedom (even if the connection may be hard to see in particular cases). Reagan's vision of crusading democracy is appealing. Why should "sovereignty" matter to the good guys, especially when it doesn't seem to matter much to the bad guys?

Here's why. The notion that national borders ought to count for something isn't just a complacent conspiracy of history's (temporary) winners. Nor is it merely a "practical" consideration. It serves the important moral goal of peace. Obviously peace isn't absolute. There will always be the Hitlers and the Idi Amins whose monstrous behavior would justify starting a war even if they didn't start one first. But truly monstrous behavior ought to be the standard, not mere geopolitical advantage. This is not just because war is inevitably ugly and innocents always die (as exasperated *contra* supporters keep reminding us), but also because the consequences are never as predictable and the moral calculus is never as clear-cut as war advocates contend. Grenada was a test-tube war. There aren't many like it. Certainly Nicaragua is not.

Respect for the sovereignty of other nations, even ones we don't like, doesn't require a world of perfect reciprocity. It's one thing to say that a nation that violates the sovereignty of its neighbors has lost the right to complain. It's another to say that the Soviet Union's disrespect for the sovereignty of Afghanistan means that we needn't respect the sovereignty of Nicaragua (a sovereignty, by the way, we have trampled for decades, as Nicaraguans well remember and proponents of doing it again tend to forget).

In fact, the idea of sovereignty does constrain Soviet behavior somewhat, not because they believe in it as a moral category, but because they don't want to live in a world of utter chaos. And even the Soviets can't ignore the fact that others do take sovereignty seriously. Ask some of our more defenseless allies whether they find the notion of sovereignty a worthless pretense, and whether they'd happily give up whatever protection it provides in exchange for the pleasure of watching the United States uninhibitedly molest any nation we want to.

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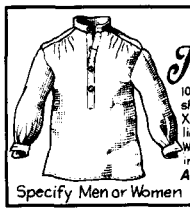

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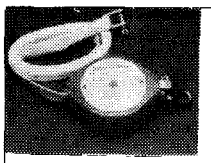

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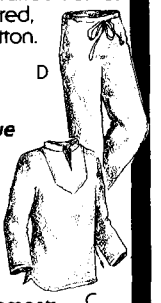

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

These Beautiful White People

THE POLITICAL MEANING of the word "fashionable" is tricky. Both left and right use the word to abuse each other but not, alas, with equal success. Look for the word on the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal* or in the tropics of *Commentary* or in the direct mail packages of conservative causes. Everywhere liberals are still denounced as "fashionable." This is humorous, although not intentionally so. In response, we liberals often complain about how fashionable it has become to espouse right-wing positions. By most objective measures we have a good case. Fashionable things, after all, are admired by the masses, emulated by the socially ambitious, and exemplified by the wealthy. Right-wing politics qualifies on all three counts. But today's trendy right-wingers like to pretend that they are sacrificing comfort for principle, that their ideological silks are really hair shirts. Basking in the popping of the media flashbulbs, they preen themselves as political ascetics. (You can catch this performance regularly in Washington's finer hotels, during conservative conferences funded by large tax-exempt foundations.) At bottom, the sneering at "fashionable" liberals is a kind of nostalgia for the good ol' days when conservatives were on the outs. It's also a sign of lingering insecurity. And of course, it's easier and more fun than debating the facts.

THE WASHINGTON antonym of "fashionable" is, of course, "courageous." Indeed, the two are frequently paired, as in that handy all-purpose book blurb: "So-and-so shows courage in standing up to the fashionable opinions of the day." The biggest "courageous" so-and-so in Washington these days is Representative Les Aspin. Last winter Aspin's liberal colleagues voted him chairman of the Armed Services Committee because of his pledge to vote against the MX missile. But when the MX roll call came around, well, Aspin claimed that he had made "no commitments," and he voted for the MX. Predictably, Aspin's liberal friends were dismayed. Equally predictably, Aspin's allies about town portrayed his ethical pirouette as courageous, and declared that criticism from the betrayed liberals was self-righteous and unfair. Now let's see: Aspin privately gives his word to his colleagues, and then he breaks it. Who wouldn't be angry at a putative friend for such a display of "courage"? Bear in mind too what the *defenders* of the MX say about the missile system. The Scowcroft Commission's tepid endorsement was based far more on the MX's perceived influence on the "Soviet's perception of our national will" than on its practical benefits to actual U.S. defense needs. Pro-MX Senator Sam Nunn admits that the missile brings us another step closer to the nightmare of launch on warning. Even John Glenn voted against the MX. But then he is not half as fashionable as Aspin.

DID YOU CATCH the epitaph for black Reaganism in the issue before last? My colleague Fred Barnes quoted a White House assistant on the subject of who should be invited to discuss racial issues at the White House. Longtime black Republicans were told to drop dead. "Why bring them in?" the unidentified aide asked. "They have no new ideas. They just want access." Not since Nancy Reagan looked out at a campaign crowd in 1980 and exclaimed, "Look at all these beautiful white people" have the administration's views on race found such lucid expression. Say you are a dedicated black Republican, a firm believer in the value of a free-market economy. You sincerely regret blacks' dependence on the Democratic Party, abhor "special interest" politics, and believe that blacks need no governmental assistance. You put in five or ten years of work for the Republican Party and four more for the Reagan administration. When the president is trying to figure out how to reach blacks, you expect he'll turn first to you. Sorry, pal. You think your loyalty to Republican principles will get you "access"? No way. Now, move along. Three years ago Mississippi Republican Trent Lott went to the White House to argue for a tax exemption for Bob Jones University, an institution of higher learning whose religion forbids blacks and whites to date. Lott got enough access to convince Reagan, at least temporarily, to agree. So get with it, black Reaganites. Come up with a new idea like "the federal government should subsidize racist schools," and you'll improve your chances of getting in to see the president. Remember, this is an opportunity society.

THREE YEARS LATER, the Bob Jones case still causes a lot of mumbling among those eager to defend the administration from charges of racism. It was "handled badly," they say. It was a gaffe, an oversight, a staff mistake, a PR blunder, a computer malfunction, a Sandinista propaganda ploy, anything but what it was: an appeal to whites who think intimacy with blacks is an offense against God. What is remarkable is that these excuses were ever taken seriously. Juan Williams of *The Washington Post* recently dissected our inability to even discuss racial issues in a fine piece called "The Vast Gap Between Black and White Visions of Reality." Williams makes the point that even—or perhaps especially—20 years after the civil rights movement, blacks still have excellent reasons to be profoundly suspicious of Reagan and of the notion that, with just a little more hard work and a little less lip, they would do just as well as whites. Williams points out the obvious: for all the talk about progress, blacks are, relative to whites, just as poor, just as unemployed as they were in 1965. "The reality, to black eyes, . . . is to know that while life is better than 20 years ago, you still are treated, seen and identified on the basis of your color." Following the "fashionable" criteria above (especially about the ambitious), the chic position today is to blame the plight of blacks on liberals and affirmative action. Williams rightly calls this "a fantastic tower of myths." My question: If it is affirmative action that distorts whites from honestly judging blacks on their skills and not their skin color, what are we to make of the National Football League? Among its 28 teams there are no black coaches, and exactly one black starting quarterback. Affirmative action isn't a factor. Are blacks incapable of holding these jobs? Or is there some other explanation?

J.M.

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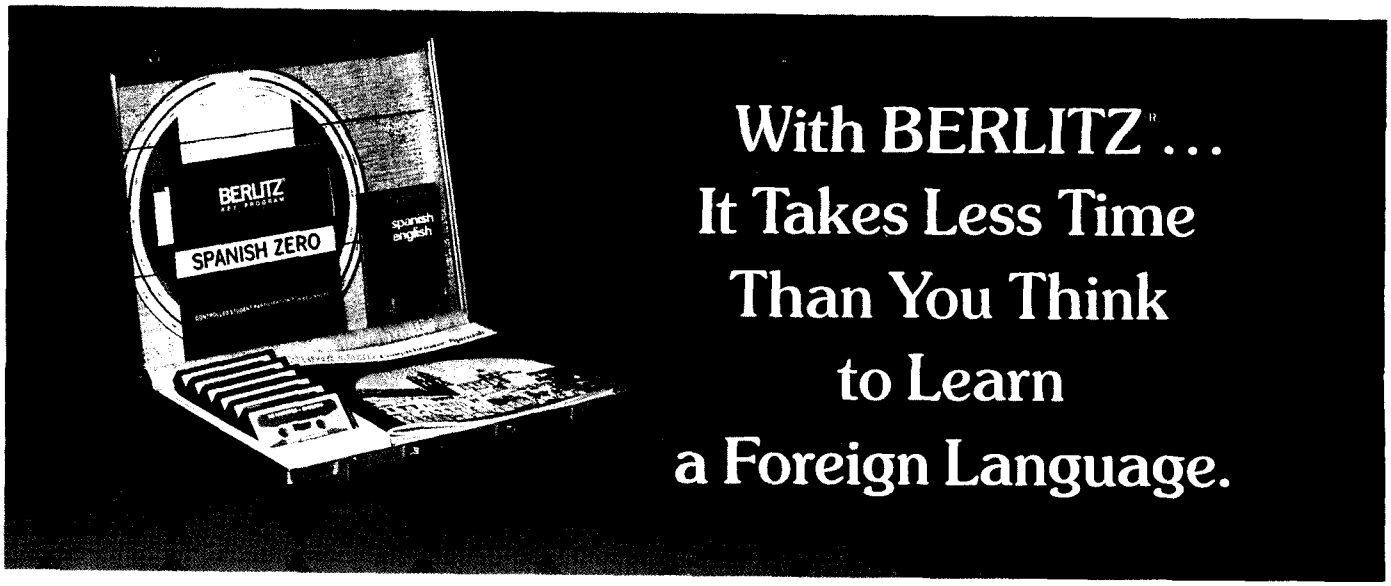

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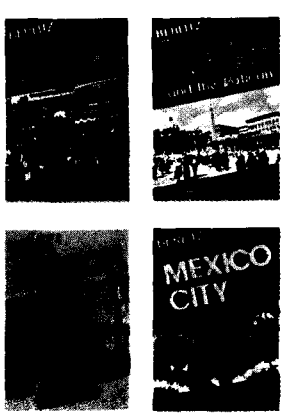

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